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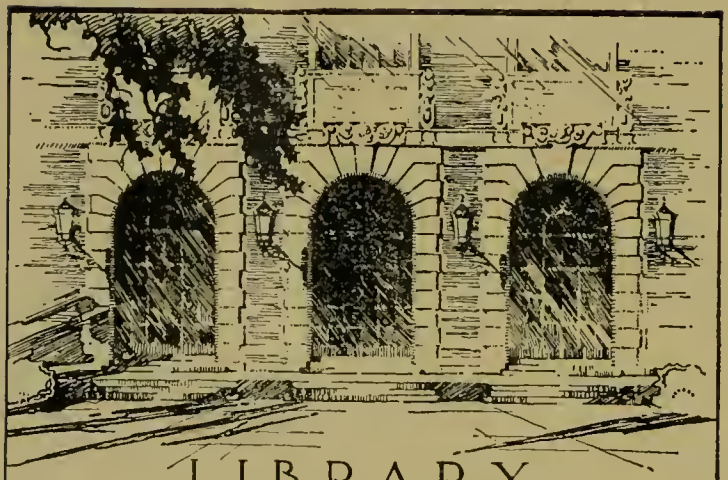

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MORLEY ASHTON.

MORLEY ASHTON:

A Story of the Sea.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "FAIRER THAN A FAIRY," ETC.

In Three Volumes.

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MORLEY ASHTON.

CHAPTER I.

SAIL HO!

They deplored the death of poor Mr. Quail; but their blood was too much "up," to use a common phrase, and their own peril was too imminent, to permit them indulging in the same soft regrets and mournful sentiments, that were aroused by the sudden disappearance of Adrian Manfredi.

Notwithstanding the wild disorder that reigned on board the unfortunate *Hermione*, the mutineers, true to their original idea of keeping her, with the vague intention of running her on their own account, with Pedro Barradas as captain, and themselves as crew and owners—a vague intention, indeed—steered her towards Madagascar, under her fore and main courses, jib, and spanker. They rigged jury-top-masts, and crossed jury-yards thereon; and, as the

breeze was fair for the Mozambique, they steered in what they, rightly enough, conceived to be that direction.

Sorely crippled though she was, and no longer under a stately spread of snow-white canvas, as of old, the fine ship flew on, and each night saw some southern constellation sink into the horizon, to appear no more.

Thus, in four days, and as many nights, she ran nearly eight hundred miles, which brought her so close to the mouth of the Mozambique Channel, that she soon began to feel the steady breath of the south-west monsoon, which begins there to blow in April, and continues till November, so the ship ran as fairly as even Pedro could have wished her.

During this time matters did not go quietly between the adverse parties on board.

A secret sally, made by Morley Ashton, Dr. Heriot, and Noah Gawthrop, up the companion-stair, with the intention of capturing the scuttle-butt in a very dark night, nearly ended in their being discovered and cut off by Pedro's drowsy and half-drunken watch; the butt—a cask with a square hole cut in its bilge, and always kept on deck for the use of the crew—containing about seven gallons of water, was fortunately taken, the cabin regained in safety, and the barricades replaced.

It was evident to our friends that a dread of their

well-supplied fire-arms, their truer aim and steady determination, alone cooled the ardour of the crew, and prevented them from making a vigorous attempt, by a combined attack through the skylight and companion-way, to storm the cabin and slay its defenders.

Once or twice, however, a shot was fired, or a missile flung, down the skylight, or a threat, or a malediction, was levelled at the occupants of the cabin. Frequently shouts, cries, and quarrelling were heard on deck, where evidently Pedro found as much difficulty in enforcing obedience as his more legal predecessor had done.

At the stern-windows Captain Phillips and his friends kept, by turns, a constant look-out for a passing sail, which they meant to signal by waving a flag or table-cloth, or by firing their pistols; but none was ever visible, nor was aught to be seen but Mother Carey's chickens tripping along, for even the albatrosses appeared seldom, so far was the ship from the region of the Cape.

Under Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot, those in the cabin divided themselves into two watches, which, to prevent surprise, were alternately vigilant or sleeping by night. This saved the personal strength of the whole; but they soon grew pale with anxiety and watching, and had a worn, unshaven, and uncouth appearance.

The horror of their whole circumstances, and the natural solicitude for the future, were somewhat alleviated to Morley, who, in the dark watches of the night, lay like a faithful mastiff at Ethel's cabin-door, through which he, at times, conversed with her in whispers, and had her dear hand passed to him, that he might kiss and caress it; but all the tales he had heard or read in his schoolboy-days, of pirates, buccaneers, and other lawless folks upon the high seas, crowded into memory now, and his soul sickened within him, as he thought of how Ethel and her sister would be situated, if the protection of those who loved and guarded them failed.

On the second morning after the mutiny broke out, and while those in the cabin were making almost merry over the capture of the scuttle-butt, with its welcome seven gallons of fresh water, their attention was arrested by a commotion on deck, and Zuares Barradas, who was at the wheel, shouted:

"Sail, ho!"

"Where?" asked his brother and several others.

"*Estribord* (starboard)," replied Zuares, as the ship was running before the wind at the time.

"A sail! a sail! hope at last!" exclaimed the prisoners in the cabin, while Tom Bartelot sprang up the stern-lockers, and looked forth, but saw sea and sky alone. How to communicate with her,

without being immolated on the spot, was the first and fullest idea of all.

They writhed in agony of spirit at the prospect of succour—it might be vengeance—being, perhaps, within hail, all to be attained, or all lost for ever.

At that moment, Badger, the long Yankee, appeared at the open skylight, armed with a sharp axe, which he shook significantly, and then shrank back, lest a pistol-shot might respond to the menace.

This man had long served on board an American otter-hunter, and was hence, perhaps, the most lawless character on board, as these craft are all armed with cannon, have their hammocks in netting, man-o'-war fashion, and, being illegal traders, fight their way through the Pacific, and among the Sandwich Islands, and, somewhat like the buccaneers of old, are not wont to stand on trifles, so, in such a service, Badger had long been inured to crime and outrage.

Suddenly a spare mizzen-topsail was drawn over the skylight, nearly involving the cabin in darkness.

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Basset; "are they about to smother us?"

"It means that they are about to muffle us, for the strange sail is close at hand," said Tom Bartelot.

And almost immediately another sail was lowered,

as if to dry, over the taffrail, covering the four stern windows like a thick curtain, and thus rendering the cabin quite dark, and all communication with the stranger impossible.

"This is a most extraordinary proceeding," said Mr. Basset.

"Not at all, sir," said Captain Phillips. "These are knowing rascals, who have us at their mercy; and have resolved that, if possible, we shall neither make signals to the stranger or overhear what passes."

"Hark—what sound is that?" asked Morley.

"Steam blowing off," replied Tom Bartelot, listening intently.

"Steam!" exclaimed Morley.

"Then, by heaven, it is a man-o'-war," said Phillips.

"A man-o'-war—a man-o'-war," chorussed all in great excitement.

"Oh, Heaven! to be on the verge of safety, and yet to be immured here with my two girls!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, with great bitterness. I shall force my way on deck. I am commissioned by the Crown—a judge—a—a——"

"To be cut down, destroyed—Badger is armed with an axe, and the first head that appears will be cloven to the teeth. Oh, my dear sir," said Morley, grasping his sleeve, "be wary—be persuaded."

"D—n my eyes! think o' bein' bottled down here, and a royal pennant within hail! It's enough to make one's biler bust!" growled Noah, hitching up his trousers.

"Hark; they are hailing—now the pirates are lying to," said Captain Phillips, as they heard the now ungreased sling of the mainyard grating under the top, when it was swung round, and the ship lay to.

"Ship ahoy!" cried a clear and somewhat authoritative voice, that came distinctly over the water about a hundred yards distant.

"Hollo!" responded Pedro, through Captain Phillips's speaking trumpet, as he sprang on one of the starboard carronade slides, while the ship plunged, as she rose and fell impatiently on the long rollers and heavy swell made by what was evidently the screw propeller of a large steamer.

"What ship is that?" demanded the same voice.

"The *General Jackson*, of Boston, United States," replied Pedro without hesitation.

"They did well to muffle up her stern—*Hermione*, of London, is painted there plain enough," said Captain Phillips.

"Where from, and whither bound?"

"From Boston to Bombay direct," replied Pedro.

"Why didn't you show your colours?" was

the next rather suspicious question of the British officer.

"Our signal-chest was washed overboard. How does the Mozambique bear?"

"Cape St. Mary bears about two hundred miles, nor'-nor'-east."

"Thank you. What ship are you?"

All listened breathlessly.

"Her Britannic Majesty's steam-corvette the *Clyde,* Captain Sir Horace Seymour. How did you lose your masts?"

"A typhoon carried them away."

"A typhoon in these seas!" exclaimed the other, through his trumpet.

"Yes, sir."

"We felt nothing of it. Do you want any assistance? We can send a boat's crew, or a gang of carpenters, on board."

"No, no," replied Pedro, hastily, as hope rose in the panting hearts of those below, and curses to the lips of those above; "we have lots of spare spars."

"Do you mean to pass through the Mozambique Channel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you armed?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"With four six-pound carronades and some small arms."

"That is lucky; keep a bright look-out after you pass the Europa rocks."

"For what reason?"

"Some Malay pirates, in three large red proas, or country boats, have destroyed more than one ship in that quarter, so be prepared."

"Thank you, we shall—good-bye."

"Good-bye; pleasant voyage."

Each vessel filled away, and the rush of the war-ship's screw propeller was heard by those imprisoned in the cabin as they separated, and as it died away in the distance, so did hope die, and silent despair gather in the hearts of our friends below.

Repentant, and almost full of horror for the part he was now acting, as the ship of war braced up her yards, and her screw began to revolve, Cramply Hawkshaw rushed to the starboard gangway, and was about to hail her again. What he was about to say he scarcely knew, but in a moment the powerful hand of Pedro Barradas was on his throat. By main strength the latter hurled him at full length upon the deck, and with one knee planted on his chest, and a knife upheld above him:

"*Silenzio, perro!* (Silence, dog!)" he hissed, through his sharp white teeth; "one word, one whisper, and it is your last!"

Pedro's tawny visage was pale, almost pea-green with rage, and with black eyes, that gleamed like two sombre carbuncles, he glared into the very soul of the miserable Hawkshaw, and continued to hold him thus for some time. He then dragged him up, and roughly shook him off, saying, as he did so, with a ferocious grimace, and sheathing his knife:

"*Por ma vida!* I don't know why I don't kill you now, as I mean to do so, at some time or other."

"So we are only 200 miles from El Cabo de Santa Maria?" said Zuares, who was still at the wheel.

"Nor'-nor'-east," added Pedro, giving a glance at the compasses in the binnacle; "two points more, Zuares."

"The monsoon will soon bring us abreast of it, I calc'late," drawled Badger, who now enjoyed the honourable post of second in command. "Thunder! then we shall all be liberty boys, and look out our go-ashore togs. I reckons on bein' all the go among the Malay gals, eh, Zuares!"

"*Vivan los marineros!*" cried the young Mexican.

"And down with the 'tarnal imps below!" added Badger, striking his huge splay foot on the deck, as he relieved the wheel, notwithstanding his brevet rank.

The headland named by the officer of the corvette is the most southern point of the long narrow island

of Madagascar; but no sooner had all sounds indicative of her presence died away, than Captain Phillips and his companions, who had listened to the colloquy above, as if spell-bound, broke into expressions of bitter regret that they had not all made a scramble on deck, and risked death or anything, that some, at least, might have been saved! but these ideas came too late, and they could only hope for a better chance next time; so true it is, as some one says, that regrets for the past, and dreams for the future, make up the whole career of human life, at sea as well as on shore.

CHAPTER II.

THE FORTITUDE OF ETHEL.

On the evening succeeding this day, Morley and Mr. Basset spent some hours with Ethel and Rose in the little cabin, while their friends kept their anxious watch in the outer one, over the skylight of which the sail was yet drawn. That which had been hung over the taffrail was hauled in; but the use it had been put to prevented Captain Phillips, on this occasion, from chalking on a black board the demand for succour which he meant to exhibit from the cabin windows, if a feasible opportunity with a passing sail occurred.

There was but little conversation with the Bassets, so the time passed in sad glances and sadder sighs; but Ethel seemed to have more confidence, more fortitude, and more hope for the future than any of those about her.

Old Nance Folgate lay on her bed, where, from time to time, she sighed over the peaceful security of her cottage in a green lane at Acton-Rennel, and groaned heavily at the reflection that she would

never see it any more, or, perhaps, the solid earth again.

Rose sat on a hassock on the cabin-floor, with her pretty head resting, child-like, on her father's knee, while his hands were crossed caressingly above it.

Ethel half drooped her head on Morley's shoulder, and so they sat, buried in thought and anxiety, each for the others rather than themselves, for "the passion of love and parental affection are counterparts of each other," says Reid; "and, meeting with a proper return, are the sources of all domestic felicity, the greatest, next to that of a good conscience, which this world affords. But its joys and griefs are fitter to be sung than said."

As Mr. Basset gazed upon his two daughters, and summed up the dangers which menaced them, how bitterly he repented that he had not remained in England, even with the wreck of his fortune, and sought subsistence there in any way, rather than have stooped to the false pride which made him seek that colonial appointment, and lured him away from home.

These, and many such ideas, occurred to him when it was too late to retreat, or reverse the dictates of fate.

Morley's heart swelled with mingled love and sorrow, as he looked on Ethel's pale and delicate

face. Could it be that they were only united, to be, perhaps, more surely parted again? Surely no pair of lovers, even in the most highly-spiced "sensational novel," were ever the victims of adverse fate so much as they.

They were silent; but their hearts understood each other, for their eyes were the interpreters of a silent language, known to lovers only. Still, as we have said, amid the horrors of anticipation, Ethel singularly preserved her presence of mind, and seemed to rise superior to the present occasion. With one hand clasped in Morley's, she sat with her Bible open on her knee, and, before they separated for the night, she read aloud the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, for religion and regard could soothe or sweeten even their adverse destiny.

On the fly-leaf of this Bible was written the autograph of her mother, "Ethel Rose Basset, London," dated on her bridal-day, just twenty-four years before, so it was one of Ethel's most valued relics; and while she read, her pallor and beauty, her pure profile and sublime composure, together with the richness and softness of her sweet English voice, were very touching; and she had listeners without who bent their heads to hear her, for at the cabin-door were Bartelot, Morrison, and Heriot, who sat on guard, with old Noah, who, more reverent than they, doffed his battered tarpaulin in a dark corner,

and, as the words fell from Ethel's lips, he hoped they might prove prophetic, for sailors generally are deeply impressed by anything appertaining to religion, though having strong doubts about the policy of voyaging with a black cat or a parson.

So Ethel read on, and Noah's grizzled head bent lower, as she read:

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things, for I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

"*But* the fearful, and unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, &c., shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

At such a time, in such a place, and with a dark doom perhaps hanging over all, Ethel's sweet low voice thrilled through every heart; so she continued to inspire them with confidence, and there was almost a smile upon her father's careworn and anxious face as he kissed her and Rose, and retiring with Morley, closed the cabin-door, and left them to repose.

"Good night, Morley—good night dear papa," was again whispered through the cabin-door.

"Good night! God bless you both, darlings," said Mr. Basset.

"Sleep if you can, dear girls," added Morley, as he and Mr. Basset picked their way through the cabin by the light of a candle (which feebly replaced the lamp that whilom swung from the beams), and joined the party who were on watch under Captain Phillips, while Tom Bartelot, with his three—for there were only eight men in all in the cabin now, opposed to twenty, including Hawkshaw—prepared to sleep while they could.

They heard the starboard tacks eased off, as the wind—the south-west monsoon—came more duly aft; and steering by the stars, Pedro, a skilful mariner, kept the ship he had captured in the course he wished her to pursue.

So, as the night stole on, a strange quiet reigned on deck—a silence which seemed almost ominous, when the characters and purpose of those who held the ship were considered; and they were more numerous now, since the death of the first mate and the steward.

But the actual reason of the extreme quietness was, that some of the crew were weary with working at the jury rigging; others had dozed themselves off to sleep, quite intoxicated, with some cases of Cliquot which they had started out of the forehold; there was scarcely any watch on deck save the man at the

wheel, who permitted the ship to yaw fearfully, and to fall away from her course every moment; while the two Barradas, with Badger and Sharkey, were in the forecastle, devising means to get possession of the cabin by stratagem, and to massacre its male occupants, against whom, for their skilful resistance, these pirates cherished a glow of real vengeance, as if a wrong had been done them; and if those in the cabin had but known the state of matters on deck, they might have recaptured the ship with ease, and closed the fore-scuttle like a trap on the ruffians below.

Captain Phillips was certain that they could scarcely pass through the Mozambique Channel, the narrowest part of which is about two hundred and forty miles wide, and studded with many islands, without being overhauled by some homeward-bound ship; and though one great chance of succour had gone for nothing, so assured did he feel of ultimately getting the mutineers punished, that he kept about his own person the muster-roll—a document which every shipmaster must keep, for therein are specified his own name, with the names of all his ship's company, their birth-places, with their time and place of entering before the mast, and so forth, together with their register-tickets—all of which he duly hoped to lay at a future day before a commissioned officer in Her Majesty's service, or some

civil magistrate, prior to seeing the Barradas and their companions swinging at the yard-arm; but, unhappily for worthy Captain Phillips and his friends, all these hopes of retribution seemed very dim and distant yet.

Slowly the night stole on.

Morley felt, he knew not why, painfully wakeful; and, unlike his companions in the captain's watch, he had no necessity to pinch his arms, rub his eyes, or so forth, to keep as much awake as possible.

The cabin looked dreary and desolate by the feeble light of the candle, which sputtered in the wind that came between the skylight and the sail which still covered it. The broken furniture, the splintered panelling, the general air of wreck and ruin that pervaded it, the deep shadows against which the pale and haggard faces of his companions, who slept with weapon in hand, were sharply defined, seemed like a vision or dream altogether, and such he might almost have deemed it, but for the steady rolling of the ship, which was now running before the wind; the noise of the water under the counter; the clatter of the empty champagne bottles which strewed the deck, and with every roll of the ship flew, clashing and breaking, from port to starboard; the clank of the rudder in its iron bands, the whistling hum of the night-wind, that sung monotonously through the rigging aloft!

He frequently turned his eyes to the dim streak of light that shone from under the door of the little cabin occupied by the sisters, and hoped that now, in the oblivion of sleep, they had found repose for a time; and in imagination he saw their sweet faces hushed upon the same pillow, with Rose's nestling in Ethel's gentle bosom.

Twice that streak of light seemed to die away in obscurity, and twice the shadow of a foot seemed to darken it.

Were Rose or Ethel stirring?

He listened, but all remained still there, till suddenly a gasping sob, a wild, half-stifled cry, and then the sound as of something or some one falling heavily on the cabin floor, made him leap up as with a shock of electricity, and spring towards their door.

Either it was fastened within, or his trembling fingers failed in strength when most he needed it.

Fully a minute elapsed ere he and Tom Bartelot forced open the door, and they all crowded in, to find the little cabin quite dark.

"A light—a light! for Heaven's sake!" cried Morley.

"Oh, what new horror, what new calamity is this?" added Mr. Basset, wringing his hands, as Captain Phillips brought the candle from the tin sconce in the outer cabin.

Half disrobed for the night, as they were never completely undressed now, Rose Basset lay on the floor on her face in a swoon. Nance Folgate, beside herself with terror, was coiled up among the blankets of her berth, speechless or incoherent—otherwise the little cabin was empty, for *Ethel was no longer there!*

The Bible from which she had been reading overnight lay upon the floor, crushed and bruised, as if by a heavy foot. Close by it was a black and gold-coloured Indian shawl, which she had worn over her shoulders; but no other trace remained in that little cabin of Ethel Basset, who seemed to have been strangely and mysteriously spirited out of it.

Morley felt stunned, and felt also how immeasurably all imagination and anticipation were unequal to portray the horror of such a shock as this!

CHAPTER III.

THE DOOR IN THE BULKHEAD.

We left the leaders of the mutiny in the forecastle, consulting, in their own coarse and blustering fashion, about the capture of the cabin, and thus acquiring entire possession of the ship.

"Batten down the companion-hatch—kiver up the skylight with tarpaulin," suggested the short, thickset ruffian Sharkey, "and then smoke 'em out, like rats."

"Wa-al, but look ye here—the tew gals," drawled Badger, inserting an enormous quid in his mouth with the point of his jack-knife. "Would ye smoke 'em tew, till they went dead, eh?"

"Aye, the senoritas," added Zuares, "that would never do; they are the best plunder on board—the plunder most to my taste, at least."

"The cabin we must and shall get," said Pedro, grinding his teeth. "While one of these men aft is permitted to live, the ship cannot be said to be ours."

"And if one should escape, anyhow," added

Sharkey, "we might have some man-o'-war in our wake before we knew where we were."

"Dead men tell no tales, darn 'em, that's old buccaneer style, long afore Kidd went a-cruising in the *Vulture*," said the Yankee; "and they or we must be gone coons, or, airthquakes and ginger! you can't reckon on what may 'appen, you can't."

"And they have possession of the bread, beef, and spirit room, and all that we most require," resumed Pedro, "for we can't eat the dry goods and hardware in the forehold, mates; so the knife it must be."

As the pirate spoke, a fierce gleam came into his eyes, and in his blind wrath he drove his knife repeatedly into the lid of the sea-chest, around which they were seated, and which proved to be the property of his American compatriot, Mr. Badger.

"Walley of Gehosophat! airthquakes and alligators!" exclaimed that personage; "keep calm dew, Pedro. Yew are getting tew riled, càpting. I'd like to gouge old Phillips, rayther, and p'ison the whole bilin' of 'em aft!"

"Massa Pedro, Massa Barradas," said Quaco, the black cook, looking suddenly out of his berth with a tremendous grin on his sable visage, "I could tell you something funny—yaas! yaas!—I could."

"*Maldita!* then why the devil don't you tell

it?" growled Pedro; "time is short, and I can't get the Malay proas out of my head."

"You know where the wite gals sleep?"

"Yes; out with what you have got to say, you dark-skinned fool."

"Yaas! yaas!" grinned Quaco, whose yellow eyeballs gleamed with mischief.

"Presto, quick, or my knife may tickle your ribs," roared Pedro, setting down a bottle, from which he had sucked the last drop of a mixture of champagne and brandy, compounded by Badger.

"Under the companion-stair, Massa Pedro, a door opens with a slide into the wite gals' cabin."

"*Demonio!* do you say so, darkey?"

"Can yew make tracks ahead now, capting?"

"You are certain of this, Quaco?" said Pedro, bending his black brows as he looked at the cook.

"Sartain as that um a living nigger, Massa Pedro, yaas! yaas! Boy Joe, the steward, showed it to Quaco many a time."

"And what use would you make of this door, Quaco?"

"What use?" repeated the negro, putting out a long, red tongue, while a leer, like that of a fiend, shone in his black, glittering, and half-shut eyes.

"*Hombre!* yes, speak."

"Get at the wite gals fust, and the cabin arter—yaas! yaas!—eh, Massa Pedro?"

"I reckons, Pedro, that the darkey is the only one among us with any brains in his skull, a thick 'un though it be," said Badger; "but this sliding door——"

"I will look to it now," said Pedro, staggering up, for he was very tipsy. "*Cuidado*, mates—take care who follows me till I call for help," he added, with a dark glance at Hawkshaw, who eyed him with sullen resentment from a corner of the comfortless den, of which he was now one of the occupants.

"Oh, Barradas," he exclaimed, "if you have a human soul, spare them. They will surely die."

"Oh, *demonio*, yes—yes. These fine ladies have a habit of dying, and always coming to again," said Zuares, laughing.

"Make way there," exclaimed Pedro, brandishing his knife with something of mock and more of real ferocity. "One of them is mine by a cast of the dice, and mine she shall be," he added, hoarsely and huskily, while reeling towards the ladder.

"It is for my sins I am here," groaned Hawkshaw.

"Well, it is not likely for your virtues that you are among us, mate," said Zuares, laughing.

"*Cuidar el lobo* (Beware of the wolf)!" said Pedro, with a cruel grin, as he went up through the

scuttle, or little hatch of the forecastle, and went aft with a stealthy step.

Inflamed to a dangerous pitch of rashness, lust, and savagery by the champagne and brandy, which he had been mixing and imbibing freely, this powerful and agile ruffian left the bunks on his fatal errand.

Save Bolter, the Canadian, who was at the wheel, and half tipsy too, there was not a man on deck now. Under her courses the ship was going before the wind, with a gentle breeze, which fanned pleasantly the hot, flushed face of Pedro Barradas, who paused for a moment, looked aloft, and then at the horizon.

The moon had newly risen from the sea to the eastward. To the west a line of deep crimson light, but transparent as the purest crystal, lingered between the dark horizon of the ocean and a long straight bank of black cloud, and the wave-tops, of a deeper tint than indigo, were seen to rise and fall incessantly between. Amid this low and blood-red belt of light, a few bright stars were twinkling.

Though weird and impressive, the night was solemn and pleasing; but all its gentle influences were lost on the ruffianly soul of Pedro Barradas.

Being barefooted, he crept along unheard, and at the companion-way he paused to listen.

No sound came from the cabin; but he knew well that there were armed watchers below—armed

better than himself—so he looked carefully to the powder in the pan of his old flint-lock and brass-barrelled Spanish pistol, felt if his knife was loose in its sheath, and then crept softly down the companion-stair, and past the cabin-door, on the inside of which Morley Ashton was seated on Mr. Basset's trunk of law-books, as already described, listening to the casual sounds, amongst which he heard neither the large bare feet of Pedro nor the creaking of the stairs, as the barricade and the straining of the ship's timbers muffled everything in the steerage.

Stooping down on his hands and knees, with his black eyes close to the bulkhead, or partition, Pedro felt about for the door mentioned by the mischievous Quaco, and discovered it at once.

It was an aperture formed in the bulkhead, about four feet high and nearly three feet broad; it slid in grooves, like a window-sash, and could be pulled up by two brass knobs, screwed into the middle of the door for that purpose. It had evidently been made for the conveyance of stores, casks, bales, &c., in and out, when that cabin was not required by passengers; and the strong hands of the swarthy Pedro almost trembled with ferocious joy and eagerness as he grasped the knobs, and essayed to remove the only barrier that lay between him and his helpless victims.

Stiffened by long disuse, it refused for a time to yield. At the third effort he started it, and a ray of light shone out below its lower edge. Stealthily as a tiger cat, Pedro paused to listen. All was still within, and the perfect silence there assured him that the two young ladies and their old attendant slept.

"*Bueno!*" he muttered, with a chuckle of satisfaction.

Then he inserted his hard, copper-coloured hands, and slowly and gently drew the door up within its slide, its creaking being lost amid the other sounds incident to the motion of the ship.

Stooping, he entered, and found himself almost within arm's length of the bed wherein the sisters lay, and he held his obnoxious breath as he drew nearer.

Accustomed to take every precaution, and fertile in expedients, he glanced now at the cabin-door, and saw a brass bolt on the inside. This he softly shot into its place, to prevent surprise or interruption by the occupants of the larger cabin.

Now a sound made his heart start, his eyes gleam, and his hand clutch the knife in his girdle; but it was only a prolonged snore from the old attendant, Nance Folgate.

While his dark eyes flashed with impatience, the swarthy Spanish American drew near, and looked

boldly and steadily upon the sleeping girls. Both seemed so delicately pale, so beautiful and gentle, when hushed together in repose, that for a moment, as the gust of evil passion mounted to his head, he knew not upon which to pounce.

Both sisters were only partially undressed, but the closeness of the little cabin had made them partly throw off the coverlet.

Rose lay with her soft cheek reposing on Ethel's bare white shoulder, and their rounded arms, so taper and delicately fair, were clasped about each other. Shining like flossy silk, a dark tress of Ethel's hair mingled with her sister's lighter braids.

A smile that was singularly sweet played about the childlike mouth of Rose; but Ethel's face was pale and placid, and the length of the dark lashes that fringed her snow-white eyelids imparted a charming softness to her face, while a half sigh that escaped her from time to time made her swelling bosom heave beneath her sister's cheek.

Never had their atrocious visitor looked on two such fair, soft, English faces, nestling thus a-bed; and there was such an air of enchanting innocence, candour, and perfect modesty about the two sleeping sisters, that, instead of calming the daring thoughts which swelled in the heart of Barradas, it served only to add fresh stings to them.

We have said that, for a moment, he was doubtful

which to seize. Rose was certainly the smallest and most easily borne; but Ethel's larger form tempted him the most.

"*Que bonita!* it shall be you," he muttered.

Drawing from his muscular bull-like throat a dirty, greasy necktie, he suddenly twisted it tightly over Ethel's face, and particularly across her mouth, so that to make an outcry was impossible on her part.

He then drew her out of bed, and, in so doing, awoke Rose, whose shrill shriek at once reached the ears of Morley Ashton.

"*A los infernos!*" cried Pedro, savagely.

His knife was his first idea; but, as the girl's life was not worth taking, he dashed out the cabin-lamp with his clenched hand, tore Ethel with brutal violence through the aperture by which he had entered, and shut the sliding door with a crash, preventing, but unintentionally, the entrance of his amiable brother Zuares, who had glided after him like a tawny snake, less with views of fraternal assistance than with those of doing a little abduction on his own account.

Rose fell senseless on her face; but Ethel, recovering something of her native energy and strength, grasped the rail of the companion-stair with such vigour that all the muscle of Barradas was required to tear her tender hands away from it,

and then, with an awful imprecation of mingled rage and triumph, he sprang up and bore her along the deck.

On lifting up Ethel's Indian shawl, part of it was found wedged in the port, or door in the bulkhead, thus showing at once the place and mode of ingress.

But so firmly had Barradas's strong hand shut it down that it was not until after several efforts made by Phillips and Bartelot, the avenue was opened. Then Morley pressed through, and pistol in hand, rushed like a madman on deck, just in time to see Ethel—his tender and beloved Ethel—borne by Pedro down the fore-scuttle, into the very den and stronghold of the mutineers!

As he sprang forward, an empty cask—part of the plunder—started from the hold, rolled against him; he slipped, and fell heavily on the deck. Then, on rising, half stunned, he heard the sound of pistol-shots in the forecastle, followed by a despairing cry from Ethel, and a man's hoarse howl of agony.

At that awful moment the heart of Morley died within him, and his blood seemed turned to water.

CHAPTER IV.

ETHEL AMONG THE MUTINEERS.

In a preceding chapter we have described the forecastle bunks of the *Hermione*, when the ship was in a state of good order and discipline, and when that portion of her hull was daily drenched with water, when the head-pump was rigged by the morning watch, and the swab and holystone were in daily use.

Now that dreary little den was as filthy as its dirty occupants could make it, and was strewn with half-picked bones of beef and bacon, with broken or empty bottles, and in almost every berth there lay, with his clothes on, a half-drunk seaman.

The atmosphere, redolent of tar, paint, and bilge, was stifling; moreover, it was thick with the smoke of coarse pig-tail tobacco, that obscured the rays of the feeble lamp, and rendered the place more noxious and horrible.

It was damp and chill, too, for there was an unheeded leak about the heel of the bowsprit, and near the windlass-bitts, which came through the

deck into the forecastle, and it made the place more comfortless still.

The *tout ensemble* of it, the grimy faces which looked forth upon her from the dark recesses of the bunks, the great chin and cheek-bones of Badger, the hideous Sharkey, the black visage of Quaco and others, the ferocious character of the man in whose grasp she found herself, helpless, abandoned, or only to be rescued after a scene, perhaps, of butchery and slaughter — the slaughter of her dearest friends—appalled, beyond all description, the soul of gentle Ethel Basset.

In her extreme perturbation and agony of spirit, she could not even pray; "but God often hears the heart that is silent better than the lips that speak."

"Jee-rusalem and apple-sarce!" exclaimed the Yankee, Badger, leaping out of his berth, and standing at about half his full height, with his long fingers planted on his knees, for the space between beams was very scanty, "here comes Capting Pedro, with the black-eyed gal—the sarcy stunner he's been nuts on so long!"

"*Para!* hold! keep back!" said Pedro, panting, and almost breathless, as he pushed aside Badger, whose insolent face was peering within an inch of Ethel.

"Jee-rusalem! kinder rum lover you'll make her, I calkilate."

"He'll make her a rough one, at any rate," added Sharkey, while a roar of coarse laughter greeted the appearance of the miserable girl, whom Pedro seated with rough kindness on a sea-chest, saying——

"*Mi queridita—estrella mia,** at Orizaba and San Francisco I was the terror of the old women and the idol of the young ones. So come, let us be friends and shipmates."

He attempted to force a kiss; but Ethel uttered a low wail, and an expression of such loathing and terror filled her face, that even he paused, and she pressed her hands upon her breast, as if her emotion would burst it.

Perceiving this action, Pedro roughly thrust his daring hand into her bosom, and tore out a packet which had lately been carried there for concealment. While holding her with one hand, he held up the packet with the other, and tore it open with his teeth.

Then he cast it from him with a malediction, on finding that it contained but a few withered leaves —the daisies she had gathered on her mother's grave.

Oh, that she were beside it now in peaceful Acton-Rennel!

"Try some o' this, my gal," said Badger, pre-

* My little dear—my star.

senting a little gallipot full of rum-and-water; "it's right Jamaiky; I takes to it unkimmin, marm, like a babby to its mother's milk. Do have a drop—'alf a totful, my gal."

Ethel shrunk back in silent misery, and Pedro kept his left hand resolutely round her waist, while holding her right hand in his.

"Don't yew be so darned proud, my sarcy Britisher," resumed the bantering ruffian, with an offended air. "We'll take the pride out o' yew afore we're done with yew. I'm a true-blooded Yankee, marm, though tall enough for a Paddygonian. The Paddygonians come from South 'Merriker, Pedro's country, while I was raised about Cape Cod. 'Guess yew never heerd o' sich a cape in the stupid old country, though yew ought to rayther, for we licked the Britishers there, as we dew everywhere else on airth, and why shouldn't we, when their hearts are like wooden nutmegs?"

Ethel looked round despairingly, but saw no aid, nor hope, nor mercy.

Bad, wild, and cruel though he was, there came something of pity into the eye and heart of Zuares Barradas, when he saw this lovely girl, one so fair, and so delicately nurtured, in this frightful situation—her dress torn and disordered, and blood trickling from her nostrils—in such a place, and in such hands, for he knew what was about to ensue,

and he knew his elder brother to be an incarnate fiend.

There was another, half-concealed amid the smoke of this murky den, who regarded her with more than pity, and this was Cramply Hawkshaw; but he felt that to protect her was to die, and to die he had not yet the courage.

At last her eyes met his.

"Forgive me, Ethel Basset," he said, mournfully; "oh, forgive me the past!"

"I do forgive you," she replied, in a trembling voice, "and trust a time may come when you will be able to forgive yourself."

Her soft, sweet voice seemed to thrill through the marrow of his bones.

Bad and reckless, desperate and wicked though he was, the memory of pleasant and of peaceful days —days of good-will and happiness, when he had tried to forget his past wild life in South America —days spent at Laurel Lodge amid all the elegances of civilised life, came thronging now on Hawkshaw's mind. So the inscrutable soul of this miserable man seemed to die away within him, when he beheld, now in a felon's daring grasp, one who had been his hostess, his friend, and the object of his own most selfish passions!

Though she felt as if dying of shame and terror, fearfully pale, and calm, and holy Ethel looked, for

she thanked God in her innocent heart that she had been taken—even from Morley—and Rose left to comfort, perhaps, their beloved father, and as she folded her white and tremulous hands upon her swelling bosom, she felt that the dread hour had come when she must surely die.

Oh, who could once have foretold the awful scene of outrage through which, perhaps, her blameless life was to pass away.

And now, as Pedro's iron grasp about her tightened, and the laughter rung around her, like a chorus of devils, she lifted her imploring eyes to Hawkshaw, and their gaze seemed to turn him into stone.

Sorrow, horror, and upbraiding—all were there expressed.

It was she, the same Ethel, that he—blood-guilty though he was, and selfish too—had ventured to love in peaceful England. She, who had never coquettishly allured nor proudly repulsed him; but had been gentle and polite, according to the rules of well-bred society—gentle, even, and pitiful—until she knew his crimes and his character, and learned to abhor them.

All this rushed like a flood upon his memory, and Cramply Hawkshaw, with all his errors, faults, and crimes, felt, for the moment, the soul of a hero within him, and he resolved to save Ethel Basset

from disgrace, or die in the effort—yea, to save her even for Morley Ashton.

"Ethel," said he, in a breathless voice, "love me as a friend, and I will protect—it may be, save you!"

"Love—friendship—Oh Hawkshaw, save me if you can, but talk not of love and friendship, after the awful past, and in presence of companions such as these," replied Ethel, shuddering.

"Alas! I feel that guilt gives a shame and horror, Ethel, which fail even to cure it."

"*Morte de Dios!*" growled Pedro, grinding his teeth, and turning round with flashing eyes; "what is this I hear?"

"Your death-shot, wretch!—take that, and die!" cried Hawkshaw, as he fired his pistol full at the dark head of Pedro Barradas, who received the shot in his elbow, just as he raised the arm to protect his face.

"Malediction!" he exclaimed, with a howl of agony, as he dropped the limb, which was fearfully shattered. Then Hawkshaw—endued with twice his natural strength—for, when roused by passion, or nerved by danger, he was no ordinary man—snatched Ethel amid the smoke, glided with her up the steps and through the forescuttle, and placed her in the arms of Dr. Heriot, who, with all her friends came rushing forward, for this episode did not occupy five minutes.

As Ethel was borne aft, a dozen of hands and arms came up through the forescuttle, and Hawkshaw was torn down within it.

"Gag him—lynch him—stick the 'tarnal varmint!" cried Badger, and the death shrieks of the miserable Hawkshaw were drowned amid the storm of maledictions which accompanied the shots and blows dealt him by the knives of Zuares, Badger, Quaco, and others; and again and again they continued to bury them in his body, long after he was dead.

It was Pedro's howl of agony, and the two first pistol-shots, that were heard by Morley as he staggered up, half-stunned, from the deck, and felt himself seized by Tom Bartelot.

All hurried below with Ethel. The cabin was regained, the barricades were again made fast, and our friends remained ignorant that one half the mutineers were in a state of helpless intoxication; that their leader had received a severe wound, which might prove mortal, and that the miserable Hawkshaw was being butchered without mercy in the forecastle bunks.

And so closed this night of outrage on board the *Hermione*.

CHAPTER V.

A SNARE LAID.

On Ethel the effects of all she had undergone—a terror equal to the menace of death—the memory of all she had seen, Pedro bleeding from the bullet of Hawkshaw, and the latter torn back to be butchered in the very den from which he had rescued her, produced fits of hysteria and violent sickness, requiring all the skill of Dr. Heriot to soothe and subdue them.

For a time she lay in a fainting fit as in a deep sleep, with her breathing so low that it could scarcely be perceived on a mirror. Morley was in an agony of alarm, lest she should never wake more; but this symptom was followed by strong convulsions, till tears relieved and left her very weak.

However, she was able to relate at intervals what had taken place, and how she had escaped the mutineers; after this, she was left for a time to the care of Nance Folgate, who was great in the use of burnt feathers, hartshorn, and asafœtida.

With Rose, on recovering from her swoon, joy

for her sister's sudden restoration took the form of alternate showers of tears and bursts of ringing hysterical laughter, which were painful to hear and difficult to allay, so, between them, the poor doctor had his hands quite full.

Morley and his nautical friends, who had never seen anything of this kind before, were sorely puzzled by the turns and symptoms of Rose's ailment; for there is but little difference sometimes between the crying and the laughing of an hysterical young lady.

Physical and mental exhaustion at length brought on sleep, and Rose and Ethel lay with arms entwined, the terrible past and the dreaded future being alike committed to oblivion, unless when, at intervals, the latter seemed to see, in fancy, those grimy visages peering out from the dark berths, freezing her with affright, and Pedro's black and gloating eyes stupefying her with their terrible expression.

Gradually, however, both sisters were soothed, and calm with perfect sleep came together.

The sliding-door to the steerage was made fast by strong screws against all attempts by that avenue for the future.

"Well," whispered Heriot, as they withdrew into the cabin, "matters are improving for us forward."

"How?" asked Tom Bartelot gloomily.

"Pedro Barradas has his right arm shattered—you heard Miss Basset say so—and then there is Hawkshaw killed and flung overboard."

"Poor wretch!" said Morley.

"Two almost out of their rogues' mess," added Captain Phillips; "but I don't think Hawkshaw was very warm in their cursed business."

"His poor father, jolly old Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn, little foresaw an end so miserable for his only son. Poor Tom! how he did love that boy!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, wringing his hands, as he thought of his old friend.

"Judging from the state in which Miss Basset says she found those fellows forward," said Morrison, "I don't see why we shouldn't make an effort to re-capture the ship, and make every one of them walk the plank."

"My very thoughts, Mr. Morrison," said Captain Phillips, with great earnestness; "but, as yet, they still outnumber us, and, unless by stratagem, I don't see a way in the matter—a fair trial of strength would only end in our own defeat."

"Something is worth tryin', sir—I'm precious weary o' bein' bottled down here, like a rat in the cable tier," said Noah Gawthrop, who was on his knees, lighting, and puffing with distended cheeks, at a fire in the cabin-grate, preparatory to boiling

coffee, for the morning was far advanced, and no one thought of sleeping now, even on the cabin-locker; "but you see, your honour, unless we had 'em all in the bilboes, or shoved clean overboard, we could never be safe."

"Not even if we had them all secured in the bunks, and the forescuttle shipped and battened over them?" interrupted Morley.

"No, sir, not even then," replied Noah very emphatically.

"How so?"

"'Cos, if you didn't smother 'em, they'd set the ship on fire, that all on us might go to old Davy together. The greatest warmints on land and sea are them Espanoles, as comes from South 'Meriker—I knows 'em, I does."

"Egad, Noah is right," said Tom Bartelot; "and to get the weather-gage of these fellows we must try some other plan than fisticuffs."

During this time the crew were all heard on deck rumbling about, growling and uttering threats; and by the number of seas shipped over the bows, by the lurching and pitching of the vessel, it was evident to those below that the wind had freshened, and that an unsteady hand was on the wheel, as she was yawing, and steering wild.

By noon Ethel was almost composed, and when she reclined on her bed, with one hand clasped by

her father, another in Morley's, Rose bending over her, and worthy young Dr. Heriot hovering about, she felt soothed; through all her overtaxed frame there seemed to flow a tranquillising and magnetic influence; she almost forgot that the same ship contained, but a few yards off, the source of her recent terror; her over-wrought mind grew calm, and the fever passed out of her.

"Dear papa—dear papa—kiss me. Sit closer, Morley dear," she said, in a sweet, low voice; "where is your hand, Morley?"

"Here—clasped on yours, Ethel."

"Oh, papa, if poor mamma only knew of all this!" she was beginning, when tears choked her utterance.

"Do not think of these things," whispered Morley, anxiously; "it is well she is not with us."

"Even her loss was merciful, though it nearly broke my heart, for all this would have killed her," said Mr. Basset, in a low voice.

"Oh, when will it end!—when will it end!" sobbed Rose.

"When we reeve some of those fellows up to the yard-arm, in the loop of a stout line," said Dr. Heriot. "I can't help feeling assured that we shall weather them yet, and my countryman, Morrison, who, perhaps, has the gift of the second sight, among his other accomplishments, is of the same

opinion," added Heriot, with a pleasant laugh to raise their spirits.

Ethel felt safe comparatively—protected and restored; but at what a price—a human life! The life of that misguided being who first cast a shadow on her path.

She recalled his last words and forgave him all, for his closing act had been one of devotion towards herself. But for him, she might, or must have been, destroyed. The imagination of all from which he had saved her made her shudder in her soul, and froze her very marrow! Poor Hawkshaw, she might almost call him now, as he had gone so summarily to his dread account, gashed with many a wound, and cast into the sea, without prayer, or shroud, or grave—cast with all his sins and errors on his head and on his soul!

She shuddered, we say, as she thought fearfully of these dire things, and clasped more tightly the kind hands of those who sat beside her.

Morley, too, felt that he could freely forgive Hawkshaw now; for his nature was brave, generous, and gentle, and he wondered whether, when dying, that unfortunate wretch had felt what *he* endured—first, when he was flung over Acton Chine; and, second, when the shattered wreck of the *Princess* parted, and he found himself, as he believed, drowning in the water—the intense rapidity with which

thought and memory rushed through his soul, as he hung for a moment between two lives, one to come, and one that seemed passing away—how all the loves and memories, faces of friends and foes, sins of omission and commission, all the errors and shortcomings of his existence flashed with the rapidity of light upon his maddened mind; bodily suffering, on those two occasions, he had none—it was all mental, and the most acute of its kind.

Had Hawkshaw felt all this when the death-shot rang in his ears, and the assassins' knives were clashing in his body?

He must have felt this emotion; and Morley, with that conviction, and the knowledge that he (Hawkshaw) had saved Ethel Basset at the price of his own unhappy existence, felt in his honest heart that he could freely forgive him all the past.

But this spirit of forgiveness by no means extended itself to Pedro Barradas, against whom he cherished the most undying vengeance, when he thought of the terror Ethel had suffered at his hands, and, more than all, the horrors she had escaped.

Meanwhile, the elder Barradas, maddened with the agony occasioned by his shattered limb, which none on board, save Dr. Heriot, could dress or reduce—for the fracture was compound, the ball and socket of the elbow being completely smashed—was scheming out revenge and fresh outrages, which he

found a difficulty in putting in practice, as the same wound which reduced his bodily strength, and stung his soul with rage and pain, deprived him of the influence he formerly exercised over his companions —an influence that he maintained physically rather than morally.

He supposed that they must be several miles up the Mozambique Channel, and he remembered the Malay proas; thus every hour rendered the necessity greater for having entire possession of the ship and for destroying those in the cabin, for if but one of these escaped, he and all his companions might yet swing as pirates, and, knowing that Mr. Basset was a lawyer—a judge or legal functionary of high position—caused the crew to cherish a peculiar dread and aversion of him in particular.

There were times when, in the intervals of his bodily and mental fury—both of which the copious use of ardent spirits had greatly inflamed—he conceived the idea of running the ship ashore on the first land he made, or of setting her on fire in mid-ocean, that all might perish, and so frequently did he mutter of these things that Zuares, Badger, Sharkey, and the rest, knowing the desperation of his character, and the resolute cruelty of which he was capable, feared that he might put his terrible threats into execution.

As for asking Dr. Heriot to dress his wound, or

by a touch of his skill to lessen the agony that wrung the bead-drops from his tawny brow, he never thought of such a thing! To expect an act of such mercy or generosity never occurred to his cruel mind as being within the compass of possibility; but he now conceived and prepared to execute a very subtle plan for gaining possession of Ethel Basset, and through her, as hostage, compelling Heriot to dress his shattered limb, after which he would destroy them all without mercy; and as these ideas occurred to him he gnashed his sharp white teeth and uttered a roar that was something between a laugh of savage exultation and a howl of agony.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. BASSET DELUDED.

Noon was drawing slowly on; Ethel and Rose were still sleeping, when the tarpaulin, or spare mizzen-topsail, which had so long covered the skylight, was withdrawn from above, and a flood, it seemed, of sunny radiance, streamed into the cabin, the occupants of which saw the blue sky overhead for the first time these several days past.

"Below there, Captain Phillips!" cried a voice.

"Hollo! who are you that hail?"

"Bolter—Benjamin Bolter, sir."

"Well, fellow?"

"May I talk to you a'thout bein' fired on?"

"Certainly; come forward."

Bolter, the Canadian, appeared at the rim of the skylight, looking down with watery, bloodshot eyes, a pale, unwholesome visage, and a black mouth, furred by dissipation and squalor.

"What do you want?" demanded Captain Phillips, with a tone of impatience and authority.

"Pedro Barradas has sent me aft to speak to you."

"About what?"

"The state o' matters aboard, sir."

"Oho! you are coming to your senses at last, are you?"

"Perhaps so, sir," said Bolter, giving a covert wink, full of sly wickedness, to Sharkey, who stood near him on deck, unseen by those below, and with his tongue thrust into his cheek.

"Well—speak out!"

"Pedro Barradas is severely wounded, sir; his right elbow is knocked all to splinters."

"Glad to hear it; hope he may slip his cable in the turn of a hand. Which of his precious friends did this for him?"

"Mr. Hawkshaw, who has been knocked on the head and flung overboard, after a bit of a scrimmage for'ard."

"Well—well?" said the captain, impatiently.

"Pedro can't come aft, sir, so he wishes one of the gentlemen below to come for'ard, that we may all toe a line, beg pardon for what's past, and make some terms with you."

"Oho!"

"He says, sir," resumed the Canadian, in a whining voice, "that he would rather have Mr. Basset than anyone else."

"Why?"

"Bein' a gentleman as is bred to the law, for which he has a very particklar respect."

Mr. Basset grew a little pale on hearing this selection; but, knowing how important was the stroke that might be won by a little skilful diplomacy—

"I am ready to go—ready to meet these men, if—if—you think good will come of it, Captain Phillips," said he, while his mind became full of apt quotations from the Mutiny Act, "Shee's Edition of Lord Tenterden," and so forth, for the harangue which, mentally, he proposed to make the misguided and—as he supposed—now repentant mutineers.

"But we have no hostage for your safety, sir," urged Dr. Heriot.

"Hostage—safety—am I in danger, think you?" stammered Mr. Basset.

"The venture is not without peril. And why have they selected *you*?"

"As a legal man, and as a neutral party, I learn from what their messenger says," replied Mr. Basset, gathering courage as he thought of his commission as judge in the supreme civil and criminal court of the Isle of France. "Shall I go, Captain Phillips?"

"If you will venture, and can succeed in bringing back these fellows to a sense of their crimes, and of their duty, an unspeakable boon will be conferred on us all; but they must agree to put the leaders in

bilboes, or set them adrift in the dingy, which they please. They must also give up all their knives, pistols, and other weapons."

"Of course, of course."

"See, my dear sir, at all events, what they want."

"There is one thing as we wants badly, sir," said Bolter, twirling his tarpaulin hat, and scratching his head; "and that is some brandy, or rum, we ain't particklar which; and a few bottles would go a long way to heal old sores."

"Some brandy?—granted."

"We have a gallon jar in the steward's locker," said Mr. Foster, the second mate.

"Then hoist it out."

Dr. Heriot anticipated Foster by opening the locker, when he soon found the jar, which he proceeded at once to uncork.

"Why, doctor, you don't mean to make it pay toll, do you?" asked Tom Bartelot.

Heriot placed a finger on his lip, as if to impose silence on the speaker, and, pouring out about a pint of the brandy, he substituted for it the contents of a large phial, a clear and pellucid fluid, after which he passed up the jar into the hands of Mr. Bolter, who received it with a very solicitous and affectionate expression of eye.

"What, in Heaven's name, have you done, doctor—not poisoned the stuff—eh?" asked Phillips, in a

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whisper of alarm; "what was that you poured in?"

"Morphia—strong morphia, and another powerful narcotic—nearly all I had, too," replied the doctor, in a similar whisper. "It will serve to throw some of them, at least, into a sound sleep, and thus enable us to overpower the rest, if need be. This will render us independent of their terms, their promises, and their repentance."

"Now, will Mr. Basset come on deck and meet Pedro Barradas?" asked the Canadian, in his nasal twang.

"Take care, my dear sir, that this is not some lure?" said Morley, interposing.

"Lure?" repeated Mr. Basset, turning pale again.

"A snare, perhaps."

"Aye—a regular plant—they're rum chaps, these Spaniards and Yankees," added Noah, sententiously.

"Nevertheless, I shall try," replied the good easy man, as he thought of his two poor girls, and hoped the time was almost come when they might be considered comparatively safe.

"You have your revolver, sir?" asked Morley.

"All right," replied Mr. Basset, slapping his breast confidently.

"Is it loaded?"

"Yes—of course."

"Let me see it, please?"

"Whew," whistled the doctor; "my dear sir, there is not a single cap on the nipples!"

"Bless me, you don't say so?" ejaculated poor Mr. Basset, who looked, what he really was, as little used to the handling of revolvers as to facing mutineers.

Heriot examined the six chambers, and found them all loaded; he capped the nipples, and gave the weapon to Mr. Basset, who concealed it again in the breast-pocket of his coat, and tried to assume a jaunty air, but failed.

"Now then, Mr. Basset, are you goin' to be all day of tumblin' up?" growled Bolter, stamping on the deck.

Mr. Basset gave a wistful glance at the door of his girls' sleeping-place, as the barricades of the cabin were secured, and then he ascended to the deck, with a heart that beat very fast indeed!

The dirty and disorderly state of the ship did not strike Mr. Basset's unprofessional eye, so much as the aspect of the crew impressed him, when he descended from the break of the quarter-deck, and walked forward to where Pedro Barradas was seated on the horizontal beam of the windlass, endeavouring to soothe himself by smoking, and in his rage half chewing the paper cigaritos, which his brother Zuares made for him; and close by was placed the

uncorked brandy jar, which Bolter had carried forward, with a very triumphant expression.

Mr. Basset's heart sank, when he found himself among these squalid desperadoes, whose persons were now filthy in the extreme; their eyes were wild and wolfish in expression, their faces bloated, and obscured by sores and bruises; but still lower would his heart have sunk, had his eye detected the ominous noose that dangled at the weather-arm of the foreyard!

From his seat on the windlass, Pedro Barradas surveyed the poor gentleman, with wild black eyes, to which the glare of passionate hate and mental insanity, conduced by extreme bodily pain, imparted a terrible expression.

Enveloped in bloody bandages, his right arm hung powerless by his side. The fingers of the once strong hand seemed dead and livid now. His ear, which had been wounded by a pistol shot, was now a festering sore, amid which his coal black hair was matted; his bare brawny feet beat the deck with restless impatience, and spitting out to leeward the end of a paper cigarito, he showed all his white glistening teeth beneath his dark moustache, on the approach of Mr. Basset.

"Presto! come forward quick, you lubberly scribano," he roared out.

"You wish to see me!" began Mr. Basset, in

faltering accents, for this mode of reception, and its tone, by no means reassured him.

"To see you—yes," said Pedro, while a spasm of agony convulsed his tawny visage; "Badger overhaul and lash him fast!" he suddenly exclaimed.

On hearing this alarming order, the meaning of which he imperfectly understood, Mr. Basset was about to rush away; but the powerful hand of the gigantic Yankee was inserted in his collar, and others were busy about his person: thus he was speedily deprived of his watch, rings, and the revolver, the appearance of which excited a shout of derisive laughter.

Then, almost before he knew where he was, Bolter, the Canadian, had tied his wrists together with a piece of cord.

"Now, stranger, yew air fixed proper, I reckon—you air," snivelled the Yankee, with a broad grin; "Jeerusalem! yew air in an almighty fright!"

"He shall be yet in a greater," said Pedro, in a husky voice; "where is the line from the yard-arm?"

"Here," said Zuares, as a rope was suddenly cast over Mr. Basset's head, and looped round his neck—a rope which, while his blood ran cold, he saw came down from a block at the yard-arm.

"Lash another line to him for a down-haul," said Pedro.

And Badger did so instantly, by looping a rope round Mr. Basset's ankles.

"My God! my God!—my good men," he said, in trembling accents; "you do not—you, you cannot——"

"Mean to hang you, eh? Yes, but we do," grinned Pedro.

"Yaas—yaas, Massa Basset, we'll make you dance ebber so 'igh," added Quaco, with a yelling laugh.

"Silence, you black devil," roared Pedro, gnashing his teeth; "who gave you leave to speak here. Away to the caboose, and look after your coppers. Yes, Mr. Basset, we mean to hang you unless Dr. Heriot will come forward and dress my wounded arm. And more than that—unless your two girls come forward here among us, to ransom you. Do you understand all that, eh?"

Mute with fear, and the awful dread of impending death, and such a death—feeling all the futility of seeking mercy from the merciless—the unhappy Mr. Basset stood in a cold sweat before this demon of a man. He had but one idea prominent amid the chaos of his thoughts, that never more would he look upon the faces of his children.

"Pass the word aft that the rope is knotted and rove," said the inexorable Pedro.

Badger ascended the break of the quarter-deck, and peeping down the skylight, said:

"You below thar?"

"Well—hallo—what do you want?" asked Captain Phillips.

"Jest to say, friends, as Captain Barradas will string your precious judge up to the arm of the fore-yard in a brace o' shakes, if yew, Dr. Heriot, don't come for'ard and dress his wounded arm" (at these words, the proposal he heard of chaining him to the mast, flashed upon Heriot's memory), "and if yew all don't give up the tew gals you reckon on keeping for yourselves. If yew understand all that, yew had better be quick, yew had."

"Be off, you rascally Yankee, or I'll mar your seamanship!" said Captain Phillips.

"I hope to crop that rascal's auricular appendages before we part," said Heriot, in a voice not unlike a groan.

"Wa-al, lookye here, be quick, I say," resumed Badger, in a nasal twang, "for Pedro's in a very bad humour to-day, and there'll be an almighty airthquake aboard in another minute."

The words, the manner, and bearing of this fellow created great consternation in the cabin. More than once had Morley levelled the barrel of his pistol at Badger's head, but paused, with his finger throbbing on the trigger, and fearing to fire, lest, by doing so, he might jeopardise the father of Ethel.

"Are the girls coming?" said Pedro, in a low voice of concentrated passion and pain, when Badger returned.

"Never—never, assassin and coward!" exclaimed Mr. Basset; "destroy me, if you will—but—but—oh, Heaven!—oh, my poor girls!"

He hung his head and wept, as his voice failed him, in the excess of his misery.

"Hang the judge—hang him!" said the short, squat ruffian, Sharkey, as he danced a hornpipe with a vigorous double shuffle round their pale victim; "no doubt he hopes to hang us some day."

This idea was conclusive.

"Mercy! Listen to me, good fellows—listen!" cried poor Mr. Basset, starting wildly, as the rope began to tighten. "Mercy—save me, save me—Morley, Captain Phillips!"

Pedro's eyes filled with their most dangerous gleam. Despite the agony of his shattered arm, in his hatred of law, lawyers, order, and persons in authority, he almost smiled at the idea of thus degrading and executing a legal functionary.

"*Ahorcar! ahorcar!*—to the yard-arm with *el Senor Juez!* Away with him, and aft with the line!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse voice, as the crew tallied on and ran aft with a derisive cheer, and, at the same moment, Mr. Basset was swung strangling off his feet, and run, with a violent jerk, to the arm of

the foreyard to windward, where the unhappy man, hanging, in strong convulsions, and in all the agonies of death, presented a horrible spectacle to Morley Ashton, who had crept up the companion-stair and peeped out.

"Oh, Father of Mercy!" he exclaimed, and sank almost fainting on his knees, incapable for a few moments of action or speech.

After hanging thus for several minutes, the body of Mr. Basset was lowered with another jerk, brought on board by the down-haul attached to the ankles, and, amid loud yells of derisive laughter, it was flung into the cabin through the still open sky-light, just as Morley, deathly pale, and trembling in every limb, tottered back to tell what he had seen on deck.

CHAPTER VII.

LUX VENIT AB ALTO.

Pity for Mr. Basset, and intense commiseration for his two daughters, soon gave place in the hearts of his friends to a dire longing for vengeance on the treacherous authors of this new atrocity.

"Secure the door, Morley—quick, or they may be on us!" cried Heriot, as he threw off his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves.

"There is no danger of their attacking us," replied Morley Ashton, panting and breathless.

"Why so?" asked Phillips, with an oath.

"Because these wretches are already busy with the brandy jar."

"All the better," replied the Scotch doctor, with a sombre frown. "Keep your pistols and the gun ready—pot the first villain who comes within range through the skylight. Poor Mr. Basset! poor Mr. Basset! Bartelot and Morrison, assist me, please; we have work to do—quick, before the ladies awake and hear us."

The body of Mr. Basset was laid on Captain

Phillips's bed, and the hateful rope which still compressed his throat, together with the cord that secured his wrists, was cut off and flung away by Heriot's ready hand.

Blackened, swollen in features, and horribly disfigured, with protruding eyes and tongue, few would have recognised, save by his dress, the bland and smiling smooth-skinned, close-shaved, and rather florid gentleman of a few minutes ago.

"Dead—quite dead!" groaned Morley, as he hung over him; "my poor friend—oh, my poor friend! so kind—so gentle—so amiable!"

"What a fate his has been!" added Tom Bartelot.

"And who is to tell it to his poor girls?" said Morrison.

"Ethel, at least," whispered Heriot with a significant glance at Morley, "must be kept as long as possible in ignorance; after the shock of last night to know of this might have a most serious effect upon her nervous system."

"Papa, papa, speak with me, please!" they heard her soft, pleasant voice say at that moment.

"Say what you will or can, Ashton; but Miss Basset must not see her father yet," said Heriot, hastily; "the shock, as I have said, might be dangerous, for his aspect is terrible."

"Speak to me, dear papa, for one moment. I

have had such a horrible dream, and all about you," she said again.

Amid the deep muttered expressions of rage and commiseration made by his companions, Morley, pale and trembling, tapped at her cabin door, and, opening it a little way, whispered that Mr. Basset was asleep, and must not be disturbed.

"Must not," she repeated with alarm; "is papa ill?"

"Oh, no; but——"

"But what?"

"Only in a deep sleep," he replied, with a sigh of bitterness, as he closed the door, fearing to excite her alarm further.

"Is this fatal outrage completed?—is the poor gentleman quite dead?" asked Captain Phillips, in a low and impressive voice.

"I fear so, I fear so," replied Heriot, with growing agitation; "I can detect no sign whatever of life, and even warmth is passing away."

"But remember, doctor," said Morrison, earnestly and anxiously, "that the time of—of strangulation was short, and death by being run up to the yard-arm is not so instantaneous as by the drop from a regular scaffold ashore."

"Of course, Morrison, I know that; but——" the doctor paused, and shook his head sadly.

"Horrible difference!" thought Morley, with a

shudder of mingled rage and grief, while he clenched his teeth and hands.

"But our poor friend was a heavy man and of a full habit. He is already becoming cold. No breath—no pulsation," added Heriot, placing his hand on Mr. Basset's heart.

"Quite dead, you think?" asked Morley, whose eyes filled with tears, as the memory of happy years long past, and sincere pity for the two girls, rushed into his mind.

"Beyond hope, I fear," muttered Heriot, who, however, still continued, mechanically, as it were, to feel the pulse and chafe the rigid limbs.

"The scoundrels—the black-hearted scoundrels! Oh, to have revenge for all this!" exclaimed Captain Phillips, stamping his feet on the cabin floor.

"Our numbers decrease. First we lost poor Manfredi, then Joe, the steward, then Sam Quail, and now Mr. Basset," said Foster, the second mate; "whose turn will it be next?"

"Hush!—remember the young ladies," said Heriot, looking up, warningly.

Cold nearly, ghastly pale, where not livid and discoloured, and rendered horrible in feature by past convulsions, poor Mr. Basset's case seemed, indeed, hopeless; yet Leslie Heriot, inspired by his love for Rose, by perhaps something of the dogged perseverance of his country, by the regard he really bore

Mr. Basset, and an enthusiasm for his profession, with a reliance on his own skill, which was by no means small; imbued, we say, by all these, he felt inclined to attempt something unusual in his art, and proceeded at once to put it in practice.

As the idea of struggling with death, of restoring life and animation to that still and corpse-like form, occurred to him, a sudden light shone in the handsome young doctor's eyes; his cheek flushed, and there was a charming brightness and animation in all his features, as he bustled about, and unlocked the medicine-chest and case of instruments.

"At all events I will try, I will try," he muttered to himself; "in great attempts 'tis glorious e'en to fail."

He perceived that blood oozed out from a cut in the forehead, received when the body of their victim was flung by the mutineers through the skylight into the cabin.

The sight of this blood gave him fresh hope, and he commenced operations at once, and with confident determination, while those around, who had never witnessed such a scene, or heard of such an attempt before, beheld him with wonder, and obeyed all his orders with alacrity.

With his love for Rose, and his medical enthusiasm, there mingled something of religious fervour and much of human kindness, and selecting care-

fully a lancet, he almost uttered a prayer of hope, as he opened the temporal artery, and then the external jugular—a vein which runs along the neck, just beneath the skin, and returns the blood from the head to the heart; but he sighed with doubt on finding the circulation stopped in both, and that a little coagulated blood only appeared at each orifice.

With the assistance of Morley and Tom Bartelot, he stripped the body in haste, and proceeded to rub the back, mouth, and neck vigorously, with volatile salts and fine oil.

When they grew weary, Captain Phillips and Mr. Foster relieved them, and the arms and legs were well lubricated in the same fashion, to restore and promote circulation.

Puffs of strong tobacco were blown up the nostrils and into the mouth, when these were compressed; but an hour and more elapsed without any sign of returning animation, and even Heriot was beginning to despair (as his companions had done long before) when, after making a small incision in the skin of the windpipe, through which, with his own breath, he sought to inflate the lungs, by breathing strongly through a cannula, a cry of joy escaped him.

The blood from the temporal artery was now trickling down the pale, discoloured face!

Heriot snatched up Mr. Basset's right hand, and applied his fingers to the wrist.

"The pulse—the pulse begins to beat!" he exclaimed; "quick, Morley!—place that bottle of sal-ammoniac under his nostrils."

Morley did so, and soon an exclamation escaped from all, on beholding Mr. Basset open and close each eye alternately.

He was then raised up in the kind and sturdy arms of Noah Gawthrop, while Heriot poured some warm brandy-and-water down his throat; after which a sound like a groan left his lips.

"Victory! blessed be God!" exclaimed Heriot, as he struck his hands together, and thought of Rose Basset, with her sweet loving smiles, and an honest moisture dimmed his eyes; "he lives, after all!"

"Thanks to your skill, doctor," said Tom Bartelot; "the world should hear of this."

"Nay—no thanks to me," replied Heriot; "what used we to learn at school, Morrison? *Lux venit ab alto!*"

"'All light comes from above,'" translated Morrison, without hesitation.

A low wail beside them made all turn from the bed whereon the body lay, and, to their dismay, they beheld Ethel standing near, pale as death,

mute and rigid, her large dark eyes dilated with blank horror and bewilderment, while surveying the scene before her, as if she strove, but failed, to realise or understand it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

"Ah, Miss Basset, leave us — do leave us, for Heaven's sake—this is no scene for you!" said Heriot, half imperatively, half entreatingly. "Ashton, I can ill spare you, but do lead her away. Tell her all, if you choose, now. There is, I hope, no further fear."

Morley put his arms round Ethel, and lifted her back into her cabin.

Still she did not speak, though her pale lips and inquiring eyes showed how eagerly she sought an explanation of the terrible scene formed by the busy group; but Morley was silent, for he knew not how to begin, and contented himself by repeating, as people usually do, that she must compose herself, be calm, and so forth.

"Compose myself for what?" she asked, suddenly. "What has happened?—who is injured? Not papa—not my papa, surely?"

"Yes, Ethel, your papa," replied Morley, retaining her hands firmly in his own.

She uttered a cry, and was breaking from him, when he restrained her in his arms.

"Pardon me, Ethel—dear Ethel, pardon me," he continued to repeat; "your father has suffered much maltreatment at the hands of those villains on deck; but Dr. Heriot has nearly restored him—a little time, and he shall tell you all about it himself."

"Oh," she sobbed, and, overcome by emotion, dropped her head on Morley's shoulder; "my father—my loved papa!"

And, as she spoke, how convulsively the white bosom heaved.

Impulsive, and wildly energetic, Rose Basset now tried to escape from the cabin; but Morley placed his back against the door, and strove to soothe and to retain her.

At first, it would appear that Ethel had not recognised her father in that stripped man, whose face was swollen, streaked with blood, and livid by recent strangulation; and thus, unobserved, she had overlooked the operations of Heriot for nearly a minute in silent bewilderment and alarm.

She was almost fainting again on learning that this helpless patient was her father, but gathered courage from the energy of Rose, who kept incessantly repeating:

"Let me out, Morley—let me go to papa! I

must—I shall get out! *Mr.* Ashton, will you dare to keep me from papa, who is ill?"

Then Ethel joined with her, and insisted so touchingly and so vehemently, that Morley was compelled to yield, and they rushed to the bedside of Mr. Basset, just as Heriot and Tom Bartelot placed him in a comfortable sitting posture, well bolstered up, and covered with warm blankets, where he sat breathing heavily; but with his eyes closed, and his head reclining on the shoulder of the young doctor, in whose face there shone a bright smile of joy and triumph.

"Papa, papa, speak to me!" cried Ethel, in a piercing voice, as she thrust herself between Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot, knelt by the side of the bed—which was nearly level with the cabin-floor—and stroked his brow with a delicate and tremulous hand, while caressingly she drew his head upon her own breast; "you are not dying, papa—you cannot be dying! oh, say so — speak to your own Ethel!"

A slight quivering of the eyelids, and, if possible, a heavier respiration, was his sole response.

Again she spoke to him more imploringly, and this time the head was raised for a moment, but only to drop more heavily on her bosom.

"Will he die?—will he die?—speak Leslie!" exclaimed Rose, while wringing her hands.

"No, not if my skill, with God's blessing, can save him, Rose. He is recovering rapidly."

"But recovering from what?" asked Ethel, shrilly; "what manner of ailment or maltreatment is this?"

"Himself will tell you all about it to-morrow; to-day he must sleep—I say must, my dear Miss Basset," said Heriot, in an impressive whisper.

"Oh, that by dying I could save my papa—my own dear papa!" cried Rose, as she rocked herself to and fro, her eyes streaming with tears the while.

"Don't talk so, Rose," said Heriot, almost angrily; "people can do more good by living than by dying, so, if you are determined to stay here, let us see what a dear little nurse you can make. There is no assistant a medical man appreciates so much as a capital nurse; so look alive, you little fairy—end this bother, and squeeze that sponge."

Heriot's cheerful and confident manner did more to soothe and reassure Ethel and Rose than all the friendly hopes expressed by the others—even by Morley Ashton. Ethel patted him on the cheek and kissed him, and bluff Captain Phillips too; which made old Noah Gawthrop's eyes begin to twinkle, and he wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his jacket, and thrust his quid of pigtail into a remote corner of his jaws, in the hope that his turn would come in time.

"There is a crisis in the life of everybody;" Ethel Basset had passed that crisis, but it had been one of woe and terror. She had passed, as it were, through a tempest of emotions and alarms of late—emotions that had separated her from her girlish life, strengthened her mental powers, and developed her faculties. So she sought to brace up her energies for trials that might yet be to come—to be a woman of action, rather than, like poor little Rose, a girl of thoughts and tears.

So now she bent all the energies of life and affection to nursing her father, upon whom, as the evening deepened, a heavy slumber stole; thus, left by his side, alone—Rose had fallen asleep, exhausted—she sat and watched, heedless of her friends, who were occupied elsewhere, and heedless whether the ship was becalmed, or rushing before a gale of wind.

Ethel remembered the death of her mother, and the dull stunning sense of a mighty and unwonted calamity and loss—the yawning of a chasm that never more would close; the hushing of a familiar voice that would never more be heard; the passing away of a beloved face, that would never more be seen; and she remembered the calm aspect of the corpse disposed in its coffin, lined with white satin, laid on her own bed, with white curtains, draped up—the same bed in which all her children had been

born, around which they had all hovered for weeks in the close atmosphere of a sick room, hushed into silence and on tiptoe, and about which they had all knelt with bowed heads, as the spirit that had lingered for hours between eternity and time fled at last on its mysterious and unknown journey; and Ethel felt that then she could pray.

Now she knelt by her father's side, in that little and confined cabin, where no sound reached her but his deep breathing, and the jarring of the night-lamp that swung from the beam above, and swayed to and fro as the ship rolled, casting weird gleams alike on the pale face of the watcher, and the discoloured features of the sleeper; but she, more stunned and more bewildered than ever, had neither words nor language, nor, at times, coherent thought in her soul, yet that soul was full of a dumb, despairing entreaty of Heaven, but in what form she neither knew nor felt, and scarcely did the chaos of her mind enable her to know what she would ask.

Rose was not with her now, we have said.

Poor child, her grief was noisy, and full of tears, so she had long since cried herself to sleep beside old Nance Folgate.

"Is not all this some phantasmagoria, or am I turning mad?" thought Ethel. "Why am I so far away from Laurel Lodge—far away upon this world of waters, and enduring all these miseries? Ah, my

God! if all these should be but the dreams of insanity?"

She feared this all the more that, by some idiosyncrasy of the human mind, amid the horror of her great grief, she was haunted, almost tormented, by a frivolous song and air she used to sing at home.

Why was this, and how was this? The number of brass rings on the curtain rods, the gyrations of the flies, that buzzed about the night-lamp and clustered on the beams overhead, the knots in the wainscot, that seemed, especially when in shadow, to become quaint and freakish faces, all mingled with the memory of this song, which struggled for mastery with the prayers she sought to say, and with the awful idea that her father was dying, and that he and she were alone together in that fatal ship upon the midnight sea.

Anon, the singular and most unwonted silence that reigned around her, the absence of all sounds in the cabin, roused her at last to external objects.

She looked out of the little state-room in which her father lay; the cabin was empty; Morley, Bartelot, Captain Phillips, and all were gone!

She looked at her watch; the time was a quarter to twelve. Midnight was at hand.

New and vague terrors seized her; she ran to her own cabin, and found Rose still asleep beside their old nurse.

"Morley!" cried Ethel, in great alarm; "Morley! where are you?"

But the cabin was dark; she received no answer, and heard no sound but the regulated clatter of the rudder in its case, and the wind whistling drearily through the mizzentop.

Ere this a great change had taken place on board the *Hermione*; but the relation of what had occurred deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE QUARTER-BOAT AND ITS FREIGHT.

The silence below was caused simply by the circumstance—a somewhat unusual one now—of all her friends being on *deck*.

They had recovered complete possession of the half-dismantled ship.

So busy had they all been about the restoration of Mr. Basset, that they heard nothing of the ribald songs, the wild uproar, and systematic noise of the crew, who were all clustered forward about the forecastle and windlass-bitts—a coarse and brutish hilarity induced by the contents of the brandy jar. Of this they had all freely partaken; none more so, perhaps, than Pedro Barradas, to deaden or drown the sense of agony he endured in his wounded arm, which was now bringing on a species of remorse for the past, and *that* emotion he sedulously sought to lull or stifle too.

An unnatural stillness succeeding the uproar which had reigned so long on deck, attracted, however, the attention of Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot;

and, as Mr. Basset had now been consigned to the care of Ethel, they began to confer with the rest about the probable results of the jar of drugged brandy.

"The scoundrels, I believe, are all asleep, or dead drunk," suggested Dr. Heriot; "I was not particular to a scruple about the morphia and belladonna I poured in."

"Then now is our time to retake the ship, and send every one of them to leeward," said Captain Phillips, starting up from the cabin-locker. "Look to your pistols, my good friends, and follow me."

The barricades were removed from the cabin-door, and those who had been so long imprisoned below crept up the companion-stairs, and peeped out in succession.

Overhead "the blue, wide shell of the sky," as Ossian names it, was clear and starry, and the waning moon, cold, pale, and white, shone over the calm, still ocean from the horizon, casting the weird shadow of the ship far to the westward, over the silvered sea.

The *Hermione* was almost becalmed, and most fortunately for the safety of all. Her fore and main courses, with a single neglected reef in each, hung motionless, like two great tablecloths on a clothes-line. Unhoisted, the jib and fore-staysail, "lay in a blessed ruck," as Noah phrased it, each at

the foot of the stays. The driver was brailed up, and its gaff and boom swayed idly to and fro. The deck was encumbered by spars, yards, bundles of sails, half-coiled ropes, and much of the *débris* that had come down from aloft when the ship broached to on the night of the mutiny, together with casks, boxes, sacks, empty bottles, and other things which had been brought out of the hold, one of the hatches of which was still open; and thus the disordered ship was floating like a log upon the water, at the mercy of any sudden squall or gale, her abandoned wheel, revolving some four or five spokes from port to starboard ever and anon, with an impatient jerk as the rudder grated from side to side on its iron pintles, though it had been "made fast," in a very loose fashion, by the steersman.

Near it lay that official, a seaman named William Cribbet, asleep, in a stupor apparently, so Noah pulled a few fathoms of stout yarn from his pocket, sprang upon him with an exclamation which was not quite a benediction, turned him on his face, and in a trice lashed his hands hard and fast behind his back.

Proceeding forward, they found fifteen or sixteen of the crew lying about the break of the forecastle, under the long-boat, or near the windlass-bitts, some on pieces of sail, and others on the bare deck; but

all asleep, or snorting in a state of idiotic intoxication. Broken in pieces, and scattered about were fragments of the brandy-jar, the contents of which brought all this to pass.

Each man in succession they tied securely, though one or two attempted to resist, even when the cold muzzle of a cocked pistol was pressed against their ears; and others began to threaten and revile their captors, as the operation of binding roused, and partially sobered them. At last every man was bound and at their mercy.

"What are we to do with them now, Captain Phillips?" asked Morley.

"Short-handed as we are, we can never work the ship, even dismantled as she is, and watch and cook for all these villains, too," said Mr. Foster; "and as for trusting 'em again——"

"Trust them again—cook for them indeed!" exclaimed Captain Phillips; "cook for a gang of pirates and murderers—feed up what ought to be hung! It is a mercy from Heaven that no breeze or gale came on ere this, for we must have foundered then, and all gone to the bottom together. No, Mr. Foster; I shall neither keep them nor feed them, but overboard they shall go, every man and mother's son!"

"Drown them, do you mean?" asked Tom Bartelot, with anxious surprise.

"No, for that might cause an unpleasant imputation on us all."

"What then?"

"I mean simply to maroon the whole gang. They shall have a chance for their worthless lives; but not aboard my ship."

"On an island—there should be several hereabout, that is, if we are near Madagascar," observed Bartelot.

"No, I shall not wait for the chance of sighting land, but will sacrifice my good quarter-boat, and with it get rid of them all. Noah Gawthrop, jump into the quarter-boat and clear the fall tackle. Mr. Morrison and Mr. Ashton, please to cast off—stand by to lower away and bring her alongside."

"Under the mizzen-chains?" asked Morley.

"Yes, round here to the port-side."

This order was promptly obeyed, for anything like freedom became a luxury now. Quickly the double-sheaved blocks revolved as the davits swung round and tackles fell; then the boat was speedily made fast by Noah to the side-chains by the bow-rope.

"Mr. Foster," said Captain Phillips, "get up a gang-cask of fresh water, and also a few dozen of biscuit from the cabin-locker. More food or mercy these piratical wretches shall not have from me; and now let us all bear a hand, for I feel that cool-

ness in the air which always precedes a breeze; so we have no time to lose. Search and disarm every man; then chuck them into the boat, and cut it adrift."

The first who was collared and dragged over the side was he whom Heriot had so peppered with the fowling-piece, that, as Noah said, "his face looked like plum-duff, with currants, on a Christmas-day."

A sheath-knife was taken from his belt; he was then half-lifted, half-flung into the boat, where he lay across the thwarts, kicking and blaspheming, but unable either to resist or pick himself up.

"Who comes next?" asked the captain.

"Cribbet, who was steering."

"Cribbet, who was sleeping rather. Over with him. Who is the next?"

"Badger, the Yankee," replied Foster.

"Give me his pistols," said Phillips, who, with his new purpose, had resumed his tone of authority.

"Now, airthquakes and sherry-cobbler! wot air yew up to?" he stammered out. "I say, shipmates —hallo! 'vast heaving, yew bloated Britishers!"

"Heave with a will! In with him—over with him!"

And in a trice this long-legged son of Columbia was sprawling over the thwarts below.

The idea of cropping Badger's ears actually

occurred to Heriot; but he dismissed it as too barbarous and unworthy, even while remembering all the man's rascality.

"What son of Old Scratch is this?" asked Morrison, dragging one from under the gallows-bitts, abaft the foremast.

"Sharkey, with Mr. Basset's revolver in his belt."

"The ugly villain!"

"The murderer of my friend Manfredi, captain," said Heriot, with mingled sadness and loathing.

"An out-and-out ticket-o'-leaver," added Noah, squirting his quid into Sharkey's eye, as he was cast into the boat with a lurch that nearly overset it; "we should lynch him at the yard-arm, captain, that we should."

"Quaco, the cook, next. Heave ahead, darkey," said Foster.

"Yaas, yaas, Master Foster!" grinned the negro, who was helplessly intoxicated, and but partially awake.

"Black in heart, and black in face."

"Bolter! Come along, you traitorous scoundrel!"

Mr. Benjamin Bolter, who was more sober than the rest, kicked vigorously, and nearly fell into the sea, in which case he must have sunk like a stone, as his arms were tied, and neither friends nor foes could have saved him; but such were the comments

made by the recaptors of the ship, as the mutineers were flung over the side into the boat, like so many sacks of wool or flour.

Zuares, who seemed in a perfect stupor, came last. There were taken from them the revolver, of which Mr. Basset had been deprived, with his watch and rings, six old brass-barrelled pistols, and about a dozen sheath-knives.

"Pedro Barradas—where is Pedro?" asked Captain Phillips, suddenly; "every rascal is in the boat but he."

"He is not on deck, sir," said Mr. Foster.

"Can he have been killed—or has he jumped overboard?"

"Not likely the last—he is too cowardly to die if he can help it."

"Search the bunks forward—lose no time."

"Aye, aye, sir."

There Pedro was found and dragged forth. He offered no resistance, but moaned heavily, and hung lifeless in their hands.

"Hoist the carrion up, and over with him," said Captain Phillips, who, though naturally one of the kindest and jolliest of men, seemed, for the time, to be hardened and pitiless, as he said, "all mercy had been quite squeezed out of him."

"Stop, if you please," said Heriot, who looked earnestly at Pedro's eyes, and felt his pulse; "we

must not be quite so merciless to them as they would have been to us."

"What do you mean, doctor?" asked Phillips, impatiently.

"This man is dying," replied Heriot.

"Dying!" repeated all, drawing near.

"Yes—look here," said Heriot.

And certainly Pedro's face, when viewed by the cold, clear light of the waning moon, presented a most striking and appalling aspect. His features were regular, even handsome; his black eyes, that nearly met over the long and well-cut nose, seemed darker now; his tawny hue was gone, and a death-like tint, as of white marble, had replaced it, forming a singular contrast to the intense blackness of his beard, moustache, and curly hair; his lower jaw had fallen, his eyes were almost closed, his respirations were heavy and uncertain; his pulse was low and sinking, and he drooped helplessly in the arms of Foster and Morrison, who had dragged him to the port gangway.

"Are you sure of what you say, doctor?" asked Captain Phillips, earnestly.

"Quite, sir; ah! these terrible signs are not to be mistaken."

"Then, how long do you think he may live?"

"Till midday to-morrow—certainly not until midnight."

"In that case," said Captain Phillips, turning to the others, after a pause, during which much reviling and growling were heard alongside, "we must temper justice with mercy. Our own safety requires that we must rid ourselves of those rascals; but this one, although the worst and leader of them all, may remain on board, and die at his leisure. Stow him away in the bunks, Foster; and, doctor, give him a touch of your skill."

"If he lives?"

"He shall be hanged at Port Louis, and, if he dies, why then he becomes what he would have made each one of us — food for Jack Shark."

Morrison and Foster carried Pedro back into the forecastle, and deposited him in one of the most comfortable bunks—one of those farthest from the cutwater and heel of the bowsprit, and there, soon after, Heriot came to attend him.

"Now in with the gang-cask and the biscuits," said Captain Phillips; "look alive about it, Foster. I feel a puff of wind, so we must soon attend to the ship; throw them in a couple of oars, they can unlash one another when sober, and pull whichever way they please. Now, cut off the painter, Noah, and set the mutinous spawn adrift."

Promptly as the captain could have wished Noah cast-off the painter; but the boat still clung close

to the mizzen-chains, and jarred—on the principle of attraction—against the vessel's side.

"Take a boot-hook, Noah, and shove her clear off the counter," said Morrison, looking over the side. "By the way the rudder hangs, there is a strong current running here, and that will soon drift her clear of the ship."

The boat, with its as yet helpless load of ruffianism, was soon shoved astern of the *Hermione*, and, as Morrison foretold, it rapidly drifted away on the starboard quarter.

"Oh, imagine what those fellows may—nay, *must*—endure, when they all become sober after so many days and nights of almost ceaseless intoxication!" said Heriot, looking after the boat with very little commiseration in his eye or voice, as it rose and fell on the long glassy rollers that glittered in the full sheen of the waning moon, whose disc was dipping now at the horizon, and sending from thence a path of dazzling light across the ocean. "Sea and sky will be round them," continued the doctor. "As the ballad says:

> 'Water, water everywhere,
> Yet not a drop to drink!'"

"Aye, yer honour; the contents o' that 'ere gang-cask won't last 'em long," said Noah with a grin.

"The poor wretches will go mad!" said Morley, who thought of his own sufferings on the wreck.

"Mad?" repeated Noah.

"Yes; and drink each other's blood, perhaps. I have read of such things."

"And I've heard of such things, many times, in forecastle yarns; but as for men positively eating one another——"

"They may do so, and welcome, Noah," interrupted Captain Phillips, who was surveying, with increasing wrath, the disordered and dilapidated state of his once beautiful ship, the pride of his owners, and the pet of his heart.

Already half-sobered, or becoming aware of their situation, some of the crew began to shout and hail the ship, particularly Badger.

"Lookey har, capting! Halloo, yew Britishers!" he cried, again and again; but the hail became fainter as the boat drifted steadily away, first out of the fading line of moonlight, and then on the face of the sea, which darkened as the moon went down, and the stars shone sharp and clear.

"A breeze is coming fast," said Captain Phillips, cheerfully, as he took the wheel. "Now, gentlemen, our only real foremast-man is Noah, so we must all become A.B.'s, and work together, and with a will! Dr. Heriot and Mr. Ashton, set those head-sails; up with the jib and staysail; haul taut and belay. That will do. Now set the driver; haul out and sheet home; ease off those starboard tacks;

coil up and belay everything that is loose or adrift on deck. We have hard work before us, and our lives yet depend upon how we perform it."

"Give me the wheel, Captain Phillips," said Tom Bartelot. "You have your whole ship to look after."

"Thank you, Captain Bartelot."

"Our course——" began the latter.

"Matters little to-night, or for the remainder of the morning; only, not knowing our whereabouts, we must keep a bright look-out. To-morrow's observations will let us know all."

"Ah, we're in latitudes now where Admiral Fitzroy's storm-drums, cones, barometers, jiga-marees, and all them sort o' things ain't no use," said Noah; "it's Heaven's own blessed stars does the business o' nights—here we read 'em as if they were a pictur' book."

The wind came puff after puff, till the breeze grew fine and steady. The fore and main courses soon filled and swelled out; the leach of each sail formed a complete arc, and the once slack sheets became taut, while the reef-points pattered as the ship rose and fell on the rolling sea.

Once again the *Hermione* walked through the waters, while the first rays of the coming sun began to play along the edge of the horizon, and on the clouds above, in tints of gold and crimson; and far

astern she left the drifting quarter-boat, with its freight of yelling and raving wretches, to their fate, perhaps their death, upon the sea.

By mid-day it could not be discerned, even with the aid of the most powerful glass on board.

CHAPTER X.

PEDRO'S WOUND.

All the few who could work on board the *Hermione* —seven in number—to wit, Captain Phillips, and his second mate, Mr. Foster, Morley Ashton, Tom Bartelot, and his mate, Morrison, Doctor Heriot, and Noah Gawthrop, now became foremast-men, and had to work hard in putting the long-neglected ship in some order. Thus, they became riggers, painters, ship-carpenters, and everything else in turn.

Morley and the doctcr were invaluable in the use of the hammer and saw, and in plaiting sinnet of rope or spunyarn, and in assisting to get better jury spars rigged, spare sails bent, and new chafing clapped on back and forestays, or wherever necessary.

The pumps were first attended to, and all the *débris* flung into the cabin by the mutineers was cleared out, the shot replaced round the coamings of the hatchway, the hatchway itself reclosed, and battened down; the buckets were hung again at the

break of the quarter-deck, ropes were coiled over the belaying-pins, spare spars were lashed alongside, and everything was tidied fore and aft, and made as shipshape as the small number of workers and their circumstances would permit; even the scuttle-butt was lashed again to its ring-bolts on deck, and the captain's spyglass and gutta-percha trumpet placed on their brass cleats in the companion-way.

All the rubbish accumulated during the disorderly reign of the mutineers was thrown overboard; the head-pump was rigged, and the deck, after being deluged with water, was cleanly swabbed up. All this unwonted work caused an unusual quantity of pale ale to be consumed, together with more than one case of Mr. Basset's still Cliquot and sparkling Moselle, which had escaped the investigations of Pedro and his compatriots.

Noah was installed as cook, and Heriot had to take his "trick" at the wheel with the rest—in fact, no one could be excused anything. All worked with hearty good-will, and not without anxiety, knowing that if a gale blew, or a sudden squall came on, they would have to reduce the sails in succession, and not at once, as the emergency of the occasion might require.

By mid-day Rose Basset, with a shawl pinned over her braided hair, and old Nance Folgate, in a straw bonnet of wonderful fashion and size, sat

smiling and wondering at all this, under the awning on the quarter-deck.

Even Ethel, pale, anxious, and tremulous, ventured to leave the bedside of her father, who was progressing favourably, and once more inhaled, for a few minutes, the sea-breeze. She found it delightful after the close atmosphere of the cabin for so many days; but she was rather startled to see Morley out on the arm of the mainyard, astride above the deep, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, and a hank of spun-yarn between his teeth, as he was busy, in a most workmanlike way, about the weather-earing of the mainsail. After a time, however, she ceased to feel either wonder or alarm at Morley's feats of seamanship.

Again the life of the vessel, though so slenderly manned, seemed to be resumed; once more the log-line was hove from time to time; daily the meridian was taken, half-hourly the bell was clanged, and the log-book was kept regularly. If less than half-handed, the large ship was now considerably under-rigged; yet the duty of watch and watch by night and day became pretty severe.

All the weapons in the cabin, together with those taken from the marooned crew, were cleaned by Noah, and put in order, with ammunition made up for them, as the savages along the seaboard of the coast of Madagascar were not to be trifled with by

the crew of a half-manned ship; and the warning the officer of the corvette gave, concerning the three piratical boats, was remembered with some anxiety from time to time as an alarming and dangerous contingency.

Mr. Foster entered in the log a full narrative of all the late events, for the information of the owners, and of the civil authorities of the first British port —Port Louis all devoutly hoped it would be—at which they might arrive.

He inserted a list of the crew who were set adrift, with all the cogent reasons therefor, and these statements were duly attested by the signatures of all on board. Thereto even Rose's pretty hand appended her signature, and Nance Folgate added "her X mark."

In addition to his new duties as seaman, Leslie Heriot had his two patients, and often Ethel, to attend upon, as her health had suffered considerably by the successive terrors her mind had undergone of late.

Mr. Basset progressed, as we have said, favourably; but so slowly that it was impossible to say when he might be able to leave his bed, so terrible was the shock his system had sustained; but Pedro Barradas lived longer than the doctor had foretold, and more than once had cooling drinks and possets given him from Ethel's own hands. Such men as

Pedro take a long time to die, and Ethel, gentle and forgiving, had no fear of him now.

Dr. Heriot, on the night the ship was recaptured, moved alike by that compassion in which his noble profession is seldom deficient, and by the poor wretch's repeated entreaties that he would dress his wound—*por amor del Madre de Dios ! por amor del Maria Santissima !*—examined him carefully, and found it necessary to amputate his right arm above the elbow.

With great *sang froid*, Noah, who received the limb, carried it on deck, and tossed it overboard to leeward.

Heriot then gave Pedro a soothing draught, to procure him sleep, and at length he slept, but with the seal of death upon his features, for mortification had set in. When awake, he endured an excess of remorse, and fear of his approaching end, which nearly drove him mad.

"*A padre—a padre, por amor del Santo de los Santos !*" was his constant and piercing cry, that, according to the religion which he had professed in youth, he might not die unconfessed and unabsolved; and his cries of despair at times reached the ears of Mr. Basset, in the after portion of the ship.

Ere this, an observation had been taken by both Captain Phillips and Tom Bartelot, who was an equally good navigator; and, on comparing their

notes and working, they found that Pedro had steered so well by the stars at night in the course he had intended to pursue, that the ship was far up the Mozambique Channel, and was then about south latitude 21.8 deg., which made all those who knew anything of the locality deem it almost miraculous that the vessel, which had been so ill watched, had not been cast away in the night on the Europa Rocks, or some other of those treacherous reefs and little islands that stud all the channel, but more especially along the western coast of Madagascar—the Great Britain of Africa, as it has been named.

To put the ship about, and to beat to windward, against the south-west monsoon, for nearly 400 miles, until he could double Cape St. Mary, the most southern point of that long island, and then haul up for St. Louis, in the Mauritius, was the plan at once decided upon by Captain Phillips; and the evening of the second day saw the crippled *Hermione*, running close-hauled, under all the fore-and-aft canvas he could set upon her, making a long tack towards the coast of Africa, while a tropical sun, that crimsoned sea and sky, sunk amidst clouds of flame in the north-western corner of the horizon.

In one of these long tacks, they saw the Europa Rocks, which looked like a long, low island, with clouds of sea-birds wheeling over it in mid-air, like gnats against the amber-tinted morning sky; but,

happily, as yet, they saw nothing of the three red proas, which they heard the officer of the *Clyde* mention, in conjunction with these rocky islets which lie in the centre of the channel.

Noah, when cleaning out the forecastle bunks—in more than one of which were traces of blood—found some withered daisies. These he brought to Heriot, who gave them, with some complimentary remark, to Ethel, and an exclamation of surprise escaped him when he saw her kiss them, and, while her eyes filled with tears, place them tenderly between the leaves of her Bible; for they were those gathered by her on that dear grave in Acton churchyard, and torn from her breast on that night of terror by the fierce hand of Pedro Barradas—that man, so long a source of terror and aversion, now helpless and gentle as a child in their hands.

CHAPTER XI.

REMORSE.

On the morning after the ship wss recaptured, while the *Hermione* was "going free," and running steadily with her staysails set, Morley and Bartelot visited the dying wretch in the forecastle bunks for a few minutes. His aspect was very striking.

His sharp features were very pale; the rich olive tint they usually wore had fled, and a tawny green replaced it; his lips were black, and, being parted, showed the strong white teeth, clenched firmly by an agony that was mental rather than bodily; his eyes were closed, and his thick black hair was knotted in elf-like knots about his forehead. Under the squalid blankets the Mexican desperado was breathing low and heavily.

Hearing them descend through the forescuttle, he opened his eyes, and gave them a long and sullen stare, expressive only of indifference, for he felt that all ties and cares on earth were broken with him now, for Heriot had not atttempted to deceive,

but had told him that the hour of his departure was approaching, that mortification had set in, that he could not survive long.

Morley lifted to the sufferer's lips the drinking cup of weak wine-and-water, the only drink they could procure him on board. Pedro moistened his hard-baked mouth, and muttered something expressive of gratitude. He was very weak and quite gentle now.

"How strangely things come to pass in this world," said Tom Bartelot, in a low voice. "So this is a son of the old hermit we buried in that lonely islet of the South Sea."

"Strange, indeed. We should speak to him about that while he can understand us."

"Barradas," said Bartelot, "your name is Pedro Barradas, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Pedro, opening his large, black, bloodshot eyes, and surveying the speaker inquiringly and with a sad earnestness.

"A Mexican Spaniard?"

"Yes, senores; or Spanish Mexican, which you please," said he, sighing wearily.

"From Orizaba, in La Vera Cruz—Orizaba, near the Rio Blanco?"

"Yes," replied Pedro, while something of native suspicion crept suddenly over his pale face.

"And your mother?"

"Oh, my mother!" he exclaimed in an indescribable voice, "what of her?"

"She was named Mariquita Escudero, a woman of the Puebla de Perote?" said Morley.

A convulsive spasm passed over the features of Pedro, and with an effort he replied, in a low voice:

"*Mia madre ha muerto*" (My mother is dead).

"We know that she died in the Barranca Secca."

"And who are you who know all this?" asked Pedro, rallying his energies; "or how came you to know it?"

"Through him whom you killed," replied Morley.

"Cramply Hawkshaw?"

"Yes."

A gleam of malevolence flashed from Pedro's black eyes; but remembering, perhaps, the cold hand that was already on the pulses of his heart, he groaned, muttered, and crossed himself.

"Your father——"

"Demonio! senores, speak not of my father."

"Why, Pedro?"

"Because I never knew him; but my mother, my poor mother, who loved her boys so well, so tenderly," he faltered, in a broken voice, while writhing in his bed.

"From Hawkshaw I learned the terrible story of your mother's fate and the crime of your brother Zuares, in the Barranca Secca," said Morley, who

looked with deep interest on the strange workings of the mind exhibited by the expressive visage of the dying ruffian, whose sole human weakness seemed to be a strong love for the memory of his mother.

"*Mia madre! mia madre!*" said the once strong man, in a voice that became touching, while tears welled up into his eyes, long, long unused to such a moisture. "Oh, senores, bad, vile, cruel, wicked as you deem me, at this terrible hour, when well-nigh under weigh for—for—*where?*—it may be hell!—when I think of *her*—of the only human being who ever loved me—my heart swells with the old pang that was so keen, so very keen at first, on that awful evening in the Barranca Secca, and my memory goes back to the happier years beyond. I feel myself again a little boy and seem to hear her gentle voice calling me—Pedrillo—*el muchacho Pedrillo*—the same little boy who served at the altar of San Jago, who waked up in the winter nights and wept for his mother, and thought her dear, dear face the fondest, the sweetest, and the fairest under heaven—yes, fairer and kinder even than that of the blessed Madonna which hung in San Jago de Chili. *Mia madre ha muerto!*" he repeated, some four or five times, with incoherent fondness.

"And your father?" resumed Bartelot, after a pause, for they could not but respect this grief.

"I tell you, senores, I never knew my father," said Pedro, almost with a frown.

"Why?"

"He was Don Pedro Zuares de Barradas, a Spanish cavalier of high family, possessing great estates on the table land of Anahuac, and who was captain of the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, for the Government of the Free United States of South America. He is said to have perished at sea, by falling overboard in a gale when being conveyed to Spain to be tried and executed as a traitor to the king."

"All that we know; but he did not perish as you suppose," said Morley.

"How, senor, how then?" asked Pedro, looking up with surprise.

"He escaped drowning and became a hermit on an island near Tristan d'Acunha."

"My father—a hermit!"

"Yes."

"And this is truth?"

"Truth as we live and now address you," said Bartelot; "what could we gain by any fabrication?"

"And—and he died——"

"After a long life of devotion and repentance."

"Oh that his life and death may atone for mine and for Zuares! But how know you all this, senores?"

"By a strange chance—a singular coincidence—Pedro Barradas," said Morley.

"Bad as I am, fallen though I be, you would not, I am assured, trifle with the agonies of a dying wretch," said Pedro, in a low, moaning voice.

"No," replied Tom Bartelot, gravely; "neither of us are capable of doing so."

"But tell me how you came by the knowledge of these things?"

"Landing on that solitary isle by chance, we found an old recluse at the point of death, and discovered his name by means of a written confession which he left behind him."

"And—and this confession, senores," said Pedro, raising himself on his elbow, and looking at Morley and Bartelot alternately, as if he would read their very souls; "this confession—where is it?"

"It was written on the blank leaves of a Spanish missal, and was lost when my ship foundered at sea. By that confession, however, we learned his name and history, and also that he was a knight of the Military Order of Santiago de Compostella," added Tom Bartelot, as Morley drew from his pocket-book the red enamelled cross of that famous old Spanish confraternity, and gave it to Pedro, who pressed it to his lips again and again with his only remaining hand.

"I feel now, senores, that you speak truth," said

he, while the tears that flowed down his cheek relieved his emotion, and cleared his utterance. "When I am dead, senores, you will bury this cross with me. And he died in your hands?"

"Yes; and we buried him near his hut, setting up a little wooden cross to mark his grave."

"*Ave Madre de Dios!*" no cross will ever mark mine; no prayer, or blessing, can accompany the departure of me!" groaned Pedro, in a low voice, as if communing with himself.

"From that written confession, taken in connection with the revelations of Hawkshaw" (at this name something of the old devilish gleam passed over Pedro's features) "we recognised both you and your brother; and we learned that your mother, Mariquita Escudero, had marked each of you, in infancy, with a cross on the left shoulder."

"Yes, senor—dyed, tattooed redly on the skin, with the juice of a plant that grows on the warm slopes of the volcano at Orizaba. "See," added Pedro, as he drew back his blue shirt, and displayed his brawny shoulder, on which there was distinctly traced a cross like that of St. James. "Our poor mother punctured that mark on each of her little boys, in the hope that Santiago would take us under his protection; but, alas! from infancy we were the peculiar care of the infernal spirit."

With all the impulsiveness of his race, Pedro

behaved at times in a very frantic manner, and these paroxysms induced a subsequent weakness and lethargy, that seemed the precursor of dissolution; but he was a man of a powerful frame, and the instinct of life was strong within him. He expressed great satisfaction, almost joy, to learn that Mr. Basset had survived the outrage contemplated by him and the mutineers; and thus, that, thanks to Dr. Heriot's skill, he had one sin less to atone for.

Then he entreated that Ethel would come, that he might implore her pardon. This the poor creature sought in terms so touching that Ethel was deeply moved, and ventured to speak with him in terms of consolation.

But there was ever the same reply from Pedro—there was no priest on board, and he was beyond being consoled. So Ethel proved his only soother, and read to him at times from the Bible—her mother's Bible—the same that had fallen from her unconscious hand on the night when Pedro so daringly carried her off; and a striking little group they formed—the black-haired and black-bearded Spanish ruffian, his tawny visage, already pale and pinched by the touch of death, pressing to his lips the red cross of Santiago again and again, while striving to follow her words and understand them, as they fell softly and distinctly from the lips of that fair-skinned and delicate English girl, who sat

by the side of his bed, in the squalid and noisome forecastle, with the half dim daylight struggling through the square scuttle above, and, perhaps, Morley, with his loving smile, or Tom Bartelot, with his sun-burned face, listening near.

Sometimes, in Pedro's paroxysms, his voice rose almost to a shriek.

"Oh! senora," he would exclaim to poor shrinking Ethel, "pray for me—pray for me. You are good—you are kind—you are pure—while I—I—what am I? Heaven will hear you when Heaven will not hear me!"

"Oh, do not speak thus," implored Ethel.

"I must, senora—I dare not pray for myself. To me the ear of God will be deaf, or turn from me."

"Oh! Pedro, why?"

"I have been so wicked, so bad! I have committed many sins, and *one most awful deed*, for which I cannot hope for pardon from Him whom I outraged, and whose altar I desecrated—never, oh never!"

His voice died away in low moans; but Pedro seemed no longer the same piratical ruffian, for, when speaking, his voice, manner, and diction were all changed and improved.

This scene, with his mental suffering and terror of death, proved all too much for Ethel's nervous system, and Morley wished to remove her; but

Pedro implored her to remain with him yet a little while, and even caught her skirt as she rose to withdraw.

"Great though your sins may be, my poor man, be assured that the mercy of God is greater still," said Ethel, weeping. "Like the sea we traverse, it is boundless."

"But so may be God's vengeance, and I have shed blood—the blood of many," he replied in a low, concentrated voice, through his clenched teeth.

Ethel grew very, very pale on hearing this, and drew back again, lest he might clutch her dress once more.

"Well, even those whose blood you shed may be praying for you, if—if——"

"What—what?" asked Pedro, huskily.

"If you sincerely repent."

"I do repent—I do repent, and sincerely too," he said, impetuously; "but without a priest to absolve me—to give me the last sacraments of that church in whose belief my mother reared me—what matters my repentance?"

Then he howled and gnashed his strong white teeth, while tearing his black glossy hair with his only remaining hand.

"Let hope for the future find a place in your heart, Pedro, and grow there with repentance for the

past," urged Ethel, while shrinking close to Morley, for the appearance of the patient terrified her.

"And then, senora, you say nothing of penance?"

"Because I know nothing of it," replied Ethel.

"A priest! a priest! Oh, that the sea would give up its dead, for I know there is *one*, at least there; but could I face *him?*" he added, wildly; "oh! that night of horrors at Santiago—I see the flames yet, and feel them in my soul!"

"Oh, Pedro Barradas," said Ethel, as this paroxysm induced weakness, and nothing was heard but his deep and heavy breathing; "whatever be the sins you have committed, remember that this book tells us 'there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who truly repents than over ninety-nine just men who do it not.'"

"Hear her, O Lord, who created heaven and earth, who divided light from darkness, and the sea from the land!" prayed the poor wretch, while crossing himself again and again, with his left hand, "and who formed me out of dust, to which I shall never return, because I must be buried in the sea," he added with something of simplicity; then, as his mind seemed to wander, he said, "*Mi madre*, listen to me, am I praying aright?"

"Yes, yes, Pedro, you pray aright," replied Ethel, covering her face with her handkerchief, and taking Morley's arm, "lead me away, dearest," she

whispered, "I must return to papa. Pray on, Pedro, it is proper, it is good for you."

"*Ave Maria purissima!*" he said, "my own mother is at your feet interceding for me. Oh, she loved her little Pedrillo so well—and Zuares too—could she have foreseen this end!"

His voice completely failed him now, and Morley led Ethel on deck.

CHAPTER XII.

STORY OF A MODERN SPANISH ROGUE.

"The remorse of that unfortunate wretch has in it something appalling," said Morley, as they walked aft.

"Bah!" replied Captain Phillips, who was busy with his quadrant; "I have seen something of this kind before, Mr. Ashton, and know it is only a case of 'the devil was sick:' you know the rest of the couplet."

"What crimes can he have committed?" said Ethel, who was weeping with sympathy.

"Crimes, Miss Basset!" repeated the captain, as he wiped and adjusted the two speculums or horizon glasses; "Lord love your kind heart, he'll have committed every crime that ever was recorded in Newgate, and would commit 'em all again, but old King Death has brought him up with a round turn."

Whether it was the result of Ethel's visit, or that excess of despair had prostrated his nerves, we know not; but as night approached Pedro became more composed, and was heard to pray very fer-

vently. The iron had entered his soul; he wept freely, and his tears relieved him; but the retrospect of his past life still rose like a barrier of flame before him, and this he said from time to time, when Morley Ashton and Tom Bartelot watched him by turns, or together, and gave him drink; for he was tormented by a consuming fever and thirst.

The night was fine and clear, the constellations that look down on the mighty Indian Ocean were shining amid the pure ether overhead, and the waves sparkled in light as they rolled around the fleet *Hermione*, for she was still running steadily, close-hauled, making a long tack towards the distant coast of Africa.

Morley had bade "Good night" to Ethel, and he and Tom Bartelot sat smoking on the steps of the forecastle, when they could equally attend to the wants of Pedro, and bear a hand with what was wanted on deck.

As if to relieve his mind, between his muttered orisons, Pedro mentioned many dark episodes of his career, among slavers in the West Indies, and otter-hunters in the Pacific Ocean; among the gold-diggers of California, and the robbers of the Barranca Secca, between Zalappa and the Puebla de Perote. The names of Hawkshaw and Zuares occurred more than once in these wild stories, which, with his casual remarks, indicated Pedro's

complicity in many heinous crimes, and filled his listeners with wonder and repugnance; but there was one story he related, with many pauses, filled with sighs and outbursts of repentance, which showed that he was more an incarnate fiend than a mere common villain or everyday rogue.

To rehearse it here, as he related it—he who seemed to be in a Hades without hope—would prove scarcely intelligible to the reader; so we shall give this episode of Pedro's past life in our own words, with many additions, the result of local inquiry. These are woven up with the text of the story, as being preferable to giving them in the tantalising form of notes.

In their childhood Pedro and Zuares Barradas in no way promised to become the outcasts of religion and of nature they proved in future years.

Aware of her own errors and frailty, for which she repented in bitterness, in sackcloth and ashes, in hours of sorrow, prayer, and self-inflicted penance, known to Heaven and herself only, Mariquita Escudero lived for her sons alone. Had she been without them to cling to, in the rash impulsiveness of her race and of her nature, she would probably have committed suicide, after the sudden death of her father, the catastrophe which happened to her young brother, Juan, on the ramparts of San Juan

de Ulloa, and the loss of her lover, Don Pedro, who was borne away beyond the sea.

She educated her boys carefully and lovingly, living with them the life of a recluse at her father's solitary *granja*, on the slope of the Pico d'Orizaba, and striving to impress them with a high sense of religion and morality, and thought that she had done so completely, all unaware, poor woman, of the latent and inherent spark of the infernal spirit that slumbered in the heart of each.

Her whole hopes for the future, her entire soul, were centred in her little boys, and this tender and repentant mother was never weary of watching them when they assisted at the service of mass, in carrying tapers or little vessels of holy-water, and when making responses, in attending the old Bishop of Orizaba within the rails of the great altar.

Neither was she ever weary of sewing and dressing with her own hands the little white surplices which they wore over their black soutans on those occasions, for she knew that her boys were handsome, and were alike the envy and the taunt of other mothers.

Pedro and Zuares spent nearly their whole time in or about the old cathedral church—a fane, the pride of the wooded valley, and founded of old by a pious follower of Hernan Cortez. They sat or played for hours daily on the steps of that great

altar, where Pedro Valdivia prayed in his armour, ere he marched against the Aurucans of Chili.

Thereon stood a beautiful image of Our Lady, holding in her arms her divine Son, with arms outspread, a miracle of sculpture and painting. She was clad in an azure robe, with an aureole and thirteen stars above her brow, all sparkling with precious gems.

Frequently Zuares used to talk to these figures as if they were answering him; while hovering in the side-aisles, with a finger on her lips, tears in her eyes, and hope and gladness in her heart, Mariquita watched and listened, assured that they would become faithful servants of God, and as such would atone for the errors of her own life, and again and again she blessed her little boys, and whispered in her mother's heart, "that of such was the kingdom of heaven."

Pedro at times spoke to the image of the little child Jesus, as if it was a playfellow; while, like the little chorister of the old legend of Chartres, Zuares was wont to say that he had divided his heart into three portions: "one he had given to God, one to the Blessed Virgin, and one to his mother." Yet, as years crept on, it seemed as if all the snares of Satan had been set around to tempt and lure them, for they rapidly fell into evil ways; they abandoned the church, the morning mass and evening vespers,

with all their duties and services; they became the companions of outlaws and robbers, and it was by the hand of her youngest and best-beloved son that the unfortunate Mariquita, long since broken in heart and crushed in soul, perished, as we have shown, in the savage gorge of the Barranca Secca.

Even the old bishop wept as he cursed them.

Zuares had early joined a band of outlaws in the Barranca, where, among many other outrages, on a dark night, when there was no other light on earth or in heaven, save the flaming cone of Orizaba, which lit up all the grove of peach trees that clothe the valley, they waylaid and robbed a wealthy *escribano*, or lawyer, of the city. Then with a refinement of cruelty, they tied him across the nearest line of railway, and watched to see him torn to shreds by the first train which passed; but his cries of despair—which they mimicked and mocked—reached the ears of the engine-driver, the train was stopped in time, and the *escribano* saved. He never forgot the horrors of that night, and became an honest man for ever after, abandoning for ever the study and practice of the law.

He denounced Zuares, however, and the reward for his capture, offered by the alcalde, proving too great for the cupidity of his companions, this enterprising youth, ere long, found himself a captive in

the *carcel* or prison of Orizaba, under sentence to die by the garotte.

The day of his execution had been named, when letters to the bishop and alcalde arrived, threatening vengeance, and to the dismay of the people, the famous image of Our Lady was missed from the altar of the cathedral church, having been carried off, with its golden aureole, the precious gems that decked it, and the thirteen stars that sparkled round her brow.

In its place was found a piece of paper, on which was written :

"A hostage for my brother.

"PEDRO BARRADAS."

From the altar, the old bishop, in full pontificals, denounced vengeance on the sacrilegious robber, and threatened with condign punishment here and hereafter all who were concerned in this new outrage, which filled all the good people of Orizaba with grief and indignation, for the image of Our Lady was the peculiar palladium of their city.

On the following day, this notice was found appended to the cathedral door :

"I, Pedro Barradas, know who stole the image of Our Lady from the great altar ; I know also in what part of the Barranca Secca it is concealed. To the altar I shall restore it, but on two conditions ; first, the instant release of my brother Zuares, who is condemned to die for mulcting a miserable *escribano* of a few ill-gotten dollars ; second, a pardon for myself ; otherwise, the Holy Image shall never more be seen."

Great was the indignation of the entire community at this insolence; but discretion was deemed better than severity. Zuares was set at liberty by the alcalde, who placed round the cathedral a guard of soldiers, with orders to shoot down any *bandido* who should appear, even if he bore the image of Our Lady.

How the act was achieved will never be known; but in the night after the release of Zuares, the image was replaced on the altar, unseen by the guard and other watchers. Some there were who said the soldiers were tipsy or asleep; others stigmatised the whole affair as a trick of the Jesuits, of course. But by far the greater number declared it was a miracle, and Orizaba poured her thousands towards the cathedral gates, shouting:

"*La Madonna neustra! La Madonna del Paradiso!* A miracle! a miracle!"

The old bishop, however, did not share this enthusiasm; neither did he think there was any miracle in the matter; for the holy image had come back denuded of its golden aureole and its thirteen stars, each of which was composed of thirteen magnificent rose diamonds.

After this, the wooded valley of Orizaba, even the recesses of the Barranca Secca, became too hot to hold these wicked brothers; they fled to the sea and took a passage for San Francisco, where, after

many wanderings in the lawless land of the gold-diggers, they found their way to Vera Cruz, and lived among some outlaws and *contrabandists* in their old haunt, the Barranca.

In the summer of last year, immediately after the terrible episode of Zuares and his mother in that wild place, Pedro and he quitted the valley of Orizaba for the third time, and reaching the port of La Vera Cruz, shipped as foremast-men on board a long, low, sharp, and rakish-looking brigantine, bound, as her captain stated vaguely, "for the Pacific, towards the Bay of Mexilones."

She proved to be an otter-hunter, and long ere she doubled Cape Horn, she had her eight brass guns, which had been concealed in the hold, hoisted out and lashed to the ports, the wooden quakers they replaced being sent below; and then sundry pikes, cutlasses, and pistols, that had all been invisible while the brigantine was within range of the cannon of San Juan de Ulloa, were placed upon racks in the steerage, and presented a goodly array; for these otter-hunting craft are lawless and contraband, and frequently their crews must fight their way against Spanish and other war ships, like the buccaneers of old.

She ran along the coast of South America, in sight of the snow-capped summits of the mighty Andes, traversing a great portion of the Pacific,

without accident or adventure, until, in a forecastle row, knives were drawn, and Zuares threatened to stab the mate. In such a craft severe measures were necessary, so Zuares was put in the bilboes, and would have been scourged next day, by order of the captain, save for an accident which happened to the latter in the night.

Taking advantage of an intense darkness about the first hour of the morning watch, the worthy brothers quitted the brigantine, dropping quietly astern of her in the quarter-boat, when the harbour lights of Valparaiso were visible about three leagues distant on the lee bow, as they had resolved never again to face the snows and horrors of doubling the Horn, and reefing topsails that were stiff with ice.

They did not quit the brigantine, however, without leaving tokens of their vengeance. The poor captain was found in his berth, with the sheath-knife of Zuares—that illegal weapon now so constantly in use among seamen—planted in his heart; and it was soon after discovered that a canvas bag, containing two thousand Mexican dollars, was gone, as well as the quarter-boat.

But long ere this was known on board the armed brigantine, her two deserters had pulled the boat into the harbour of Valparaiso, where they scuttled her, and landed at the Almendral, a suburb which

lies close by the shore, and is chiefly inhabited by those who are employed about the shipping.

Here they divided the contents of the bag between them, and the precious pair having shaken hands, they separated, each to shift for himself.

Master of a thousand silver dollars, and of himself—rid of his brother Zuares, whose petulant and fiery temper was frequently the means of embroiling him in useless, or what he deemed still worse, unprofitable quarrels—Pedro hoped to enjoy himself in Chili, and without fear, too, as the mates and crew of the otter-hunter (of whom our late American acquaintance, Mr. Bill Badger, formed one), were already too far beyond the pale of all laws, even those of South America, to seek either him or Zuares, especially under the Cordilleras de los Andes.

He resolved to get rid of his sailor's costume; to dress himself like an emigrant hidalgo; to take upon himself the airs, and certainly all the ease of one, until his money was spent, and something else turned up. He was not without hope, too, of replenishing his stock at the Casa de Juego, or gaming-house (as we have related he was never without a pair of cogged *dados*), and he knew, from his previous habits and education, that he could act tolerably well the part he meant to assume; and who could say that he might not, if a run of fortune

favoured him, marry an heiress, and settle down pleasantly till the money was spent.

"*Come esta el Senor Caballero Don Pedro,*" said he, as he lit a cigarito, and slapped the bag containing his dollars with great gusto; "courage, and to work at once, for the day will soon dawn."

He quitted the Almendral, with its muddy streets and unpaved narrow lanes, and just as the sun was rising, or, rather, as its light was descending on the steep red cliffs, and penetrating into the deep dark mountain gullies that overhang the city of Valparaiso—or the Valley of Paradise—he found himself amid the opening shops and early morning bustle of the spacious Plaza de la Victoria.

He soon found the shop of a clothier (all shopkeepers in Valparaiso are Frenchmen), under whose auspices he substituted his forecastle attire for a round jacket of fine claret colour, braided elaborately with yellow and scarlet silk, especially about the breast, and slit-up sleeves, loose, braided trousers of some light material, girt at the waist by a Spanish sash of the Chilian colours. His sou'-wester gave place to a smart sombrero of black velvet, with a plush bob of the same sable hue on one side, and a long scarlet riband flowing on the other; and in lieu of the dingy checked shirt, which was washed once weekly, and strung on the mainstay to dry,

he exhibited one of spotless linen, with elaborate needlework on the breast.

A poncho cloak, black without and scarlet within, was thrown over the left shoulder, for use by night, for ornament by day, and to conceal the bowie-knife and revolver, which completed his equipment.

After a barber had shaved off his luxuriant beard and whiskers, leaving only the heavy, black, and well-trimmed moustache, Pedro walked along the shady side of the Plaza de la Victoria, surveying his outward mien in the plate-glass windows as he passed them, a long regalia between his lips, master still of 930 dollars, and perfectly satisfied with himself, and with the South American world in general.

In the shop of the barber he had filled up a spare moment, by fitting on, and pocketing unseen, a luxuriant red wig, which he thought might at some time prove useful to him; and aware that a traveller without baggage has always short credit and a shady reputation, he next procured a handsome trunk of ample dimensions, with screws to fix it to the floor of any place which he might happen to honour with his residence—a very old "dodge," indeed, or, as the Spaniards would call it, *tergiversacion*.

Repairing to the Posa de San Augustin, still kept

by a person named Felipe Fernandez, close by the Church of the Augustin Friars, he chose an apartment, from the lattice of which he could have a view of the volcano of Aconagua, sending a tremendous column of smoke up to the very zenith, through a sky of wonderful purity, against the blue of which the snow-capped Andes stood in a clear and awful outline; and this selection impressed Signor Fernandez that his guest was a wealthy hidalgo in search of the picturesque.

"*Basta!*" said Pedro, as he tore a roasted galina to pieces at dinner, and devoured it with more rapidity than grace, "I have eaten nothing for two days; but this is excellent, and the wine, too—your health, brother Zuares."

At this posada Pedro resided for several days, and ran up a goodly bill, chiefly for stronger liquors than are usually drunk by noble hidalgos; but his trunk being securely screwed to the floor, so as to be quite immovable, Felipe Fernandez was quite easy on the subject, believing that a guest with a box so ponderous—full of *duros*, no doubt—could not levant in a hurry.

Pedro's tastes and instincts would have led him towards the alleys of the Almendral, the harbour, and the shipping; but he remembered the little accident which occurred on the last night he and Zuares spent on board the brigantine, so he wisely

avoided the vicinity of the sea-shore, and turned his thoughts inland.

He actually gave himself airs of propriety, and inquired of Signor Fernandez which was the most attractive church in Valparaiso. Pedro meant attractive in the number of fair devotees; but Felipe understood him differently and replied:

"The Matriz Church, senor. The Padres Eizagiuerro and Ugarte, from Santiago, are preaching there now. The former is the Apostolic Nuncio, and friend of His Holiness the Pope."

"And their preaching draws the people in numbers?"

"Yes, senor," replied the host, bowing lower.

"I am particularly fond of a good sermon, and love to see a well-filled church."

"Why, senor, the people go for various reasons," continued Fernandez, smiling; "the women to show themselves."

"And the men—what do they go for?"

"To see the women, or put off time till the theatre opens."

"*Bueno!* I shall go to see the women, and hear the Padre—what the devil's his name?"

So Pedro hung a brass medal of the Madonna at his neck, bought a rosary as thick as a hawser, and went to the Matriz Church to vespers, and always fell asleep. Mass was too early for him, he was

always a-bed then. As all the women were very old or very ugly, he soon grew tired of the eloquence of the Padres Ugarte and Eizagiuerro.

The latter was the most popular; the church was usually filled by a dense crowd, who stood, as there was no sitting space, and through whom Pedro's brawny arms and square shoulders forced a passage, without ceremony, right and left, straight up to the pulpit, in spite of crinoline or other obstructions, and reiterated exclamations of annoyance.

"Senor, the church is quite full!"

"So I see, senora. A charming place, isn't it?"

"Senor, you *cannot* pass further!" exclaimed someone else.

"I shall try," was the cool response.

"Senor, how can you be so troublesome?" exclaimed a young man angrily.

Pedro turned to him with a dark scowl.

A young lady, closely veiled, was hanging on his arm.

"Perez—dear Perez!" said she, entreatingly, and, with a voice of great sweetness, added, "Senor, do not crush me so, if you please."

"Do I incommode you, senora?" stammered Pedro.

"Very much indeed."

"Pardon me—I shall make room."

And he did so by lurching forward and squeezing

an old duenna against a pillar, where she was nearly suffocated by his huge back, and from whence he began to eye—almost ogle—the young lady who had spoken.

Her features, though partially hidden by a black lace veil, were charming and soft, and the pressure of the crowd had deranged it so far as to permit Pedro's bold and wandering eye to see enough of an adorable white neck and swelling bust to make him long to look on more.

Her nostrils and lips in contour were singularly fine, her tresses were of a rich ripply brown, and a valuable rosary was in her pretty hands, which were cased in well-fitting gloves of lavender-coloured kid.

Pedro was smitten. He continued to ogle and leer, and make a cushion of the old lady behind, in a mode of which the young girl was all unconscious, for she never looked at him once, though her male companion, whom she had named Perez, felt undisguised anger and uneasiness from time to time.

Of his frowns Pedro saw nothing, for his attention was riveted on the sweet young girl, so nothing heard he of the Reverend Padre Eizagiuerro's denunciations of worldly sin and iniquity.

The sermon over, and benediction given, Pedro rushed to the font, that he might give her some holy water in the hollow of his hand; but Perez, by an awkward or intended motion, knocked it into the

eyes of Pedro, who was half blinded by its saline property. He uttered a malediction, and resolved to follow the little beauty; but she was driven away in a handsome carriage.

Again and again he came to vespers; but the sweet girl was no longer there to mingle her soft voice with the hymn; and, as we have said, the other fair ones who attended the Matriz Church were not to our adventurer's taste, he contented himself by leering at all the girls who promenaded in the Plaza, and this he did so pointedly, that, in one or two instances, nothing saved him from being punished summarily, even in that city of poniards and police, but his towering figure, muscular limbs, and dare-devil aspect.

A fortnight slipped away without any adventure.

He had not yet fallen on an heiress, and already 400 of his beloved dollars had slipped away, but not in works of charity or devotion. Money is easier spent than won everywhere, so Pedro began to get tired of Valparaiso.

He certainly led a very jolly life. There were no watches to keep in the wind and rain; no hoarse voice at the fore-scuttle summoned all hands to reef topsails on a sleety night; no scrambling for the best of the beef and potatoes in the filthy mess kid; no weevils to pick out of the mouldy biscuits; no pumps to work at, or decks to scrub; but withal

Pedro—he knew not why—began to be weary, and wonder what Zuares was about: whether his share of the spoil was spent, and where he had turned his steps.

In Valparaiso, the mercantile men are nearly all Britons, Americans, or Germans. Thus, in the *cafés* frequented by Pedro, his appearance and bearing did not suit their taste exactly, and he never got beyond receiving and giving a very cold bow, exchanging a light for his cigar, or a civil remark now and then.

If he had the fumes of wine in his head—an element it was seldom without—he rattled out a forecastle oath in Spanish or English, which made them stare at him, and then at each other. Though twice at the Casa de Juego he had more than replenished his exchequer so rapidly that suspicion of foul play was excited, on one evening fortune was so decidedly against him that he walked forth into the Plaza with only ten dollars in his pocket, and the prospect of receiving his bill at the posada, amounting to 400 at least, which had been overdue now more than a week.

"*Los Infernos!*" thought he; "what is to be done now?"

The idea of donning his red wig, taking a turn through the streets after dark, and relieving some belated citizen of his purse, occurred to him; but he

reflected on the acumen of the well-regulated police, and, with a malediction on things in general, wished himself at San Francisco, or La Villa Rica del Vera Cruz.

The evening was singularly beautiful; so much so that even Pedro could not be insensible to its lovely calm, and to the wonderful rocky scenery that overhangs the Valley of Paradise, as he rambled listlessly along the harbour towards the fort, on which the flag of the Chilian Republic was waving.

The stupendous hills that overlook the city were steeped in golden light, which streamed into the ravines that yawned beneath them; and each of these ravines seemed to be piled up on both sides with white-walled houses—for every chasm formed as it were a street, that branched upward from the low-lying suburb, named the Almendral.

The spires, the bay with its shipping, the cannon on the batteries, were all burnished with the yellow sheen, and over all, towering blue and dim in the distance, rose the cone of Aconcagua, sending a cloud of sombre smoke on the south wind, far away towards the woody and snowy Andes, whose summits rise above the limits of eternal frost — for the burning mountain we have named is 23,000 feet above the level of the sea at Valparaiso; and there are thirteen similar peaks in Chili, all nearly in a

constant state of eruption, flame, smoke, and lava.

The lattices of a thousand villas that nestled on the sloping hills were gleaming in the light of the setting sun, as he sunk into the waters of the Pacific, casting the shadows of their walls and terraced roofs on gardens, where the gorgeous, but scentless, flowers of the tropics were closing their petals, and where the deep green leaves of the guava contrasted with the purple tints of the olive, the golden bulbs of the orange, and the giant quinces of Chili, that were ripening in his warmth—the glow of a summer that never ceases.

Pedro surveyed all this with a half-listless, half-pleased eye; and he watched the groups of idlers, in their pictureque dresses of gaudy colours, who thronged the harbour mole and evening promenade. There were the graceful Spanish whites, particularly the donzellas, with their sparkling eyes and piquante smiles, their black lace mantillas, short crinolines, and taper ankles; the slenderly-formed and olive-skinned mestizoes, and the half-naked, supple, and grinning mulattoes, who sung so gaily as they worked in gangs at cranes or capstan-bars.

Several padres were among the promenaders, chiefly Grey Friars, in greasy frocks and hoods, with beads and cord complete; and Chilian soldiers were

not wanting, in tawdry uniforms, with plenty of braid without, and plenty of fleas within.

Two priests passed him—they were tall, thin, and sallow men—for whom all made way, for they were the famous preachers from Santiago, the Padres Ugarte and Eizagiuerro ; and when Pedro lifted his sombrero, a pang shot through his heart as he thought of Zuares, and their boyish days, when they carried tapers, or swung the censer before the old Bishop of Orizaba—of what they were, and what they might have been.

"*Caramba !*" he muttered, "why should I think of such things ?"

The harbour was full of shipping from Lima and Peru, taking in Cordovan leather in brown bales, cordage in vast coils, and dried fruit in boxes of all sizes. The waves curled in golden prisms over the great rock that lies near the shore, and the yellow-billed and speckled seamews that always cluster there fled screaming towards the offing, as the flag was hauled down and the evening gun boomed across the water from the fort which the Spaniards built of old as a defence against the Indians.

The evening was calm and mild, and the hum of the city was carried away by the soft breeze that swept across the bay, where hundreds of pleasure-boats were shooting to and fro under sail or oar.

Suddenly a gaudy little pinnace, that was running

for the stairs near the old half-moon battery, caught the nautical eye of Pedro.

"Luff, luff, presto!" he exclaimed, as he saw there was something foul with the sheet; "luff, you lubber!"

The words had scarcely left his lips ere there was a shout from the spectators. The shoulder-of-mutton sail shivered and flapped as the boat broached-to and capsized.

Then a lady and gentleman were seen floundering and splashing in the water. The latter succeeded in reaching the keel of the inverted boat, to which he clung, wildly shouting for help the while; but the former was swept by the current that ran round the harbour rock.

"My daughter! *O Dios mio!* my poor daughter! She will perish—she will drown! Who will save her? *O Madre de Dios!* who will save her?" exclaimed an old gentleman, rushing in despair along the quay, wringing his hands, and gesticulating, as foreigners only do, appealing to several men in vain.

Pedro saw the girl rising and sinking alternately as her crinoline buoyed her up, and piteously she shrieked every time she rose. He coolly measured the distance from the quay to where she was drowning. He could swim like a fish; but he thought of his new finery, so recently donned, and was turning

away, when the unfortunate father rushed forward and grasped his hands.

"Can you swim, senor?" he asked, impetuously.

"Yes, a little," replied Pedro, with hesitation.

"You can—you can!"

"Like a duck or a dolphin sometimes."

"A thousand dollars, if you save my poor girl, shall be yours!" exclaimed the old man, weeping.

"Are you sure that——"

"I can pay you? Eh, eh. *O Dios mio!* she will drown before my eyes while this wretch chaffers for her life. Oh, my Ignez! my Ignez!"

"Save her, if you can swim, I command you!" cried the full, deep voice of the Padre Eizagiuerro, who rushed forward. "Quick, senor! he who implores you to save his child—his only child—is the wealthy Moreno, the richest merchant in the city of Santiago."

"Too late!—too late!—she sinks! Pray to God for her!" cried a hundred voices.

"In, in!" exclaimed the Padres Ugarte and Eizagiuerro together, for her father was almost speechless with despair; "in, if you are a swimmer—two thousand dollars if you save her!"

"Half my fortune—yea, all, if you will but save her!" groaned the unhappy father.

"Shame! shame!" muttered the crowd.

"Two thousand will do—*presto!* here goes!"

said Pedro, as he cast his sombrero, poncho, gaudy jacket and vest, his knife and revolver, to the care of old Moreno, and plunged into the water amid the joyous yells of the negroes, and the loud "*Vivas!*" of the white and yellow spectators, many of whom were already stripping as if to anticipate him.

Pedro's head of black curly hair was soon seen to rise above the water as he swam, unerringly as a Newfoundland dog, to where the man was gesticulating frantically on the keel of the capsized boat, and to where the poor girl had sunk.

There he dived down, and all who looked on held their breath for a time; many crossed themselves very devoutly; the two padres raised their hands and eyes to heaven, and all the friars were on their knees, with many of the people.

Again a "*Viva!*" rent the air, as Pedro reappeared, but a few yards off, with the girl on his left arm, while he swam vigorously with his right, and gained the battery steps, even before a boat could reach her, for which he was by no means anxious, as he wished to enjoy the entire credit and profit of the enterprise; but life seemed almost extinct in the poor creature.

"Dead or alive," muttered the heartless Pedro; "'tis nothing to me; 2,000 dollars are a good set-off against a wet shirt!"

The strong hand of the Padre Eizagieurro grasped

his, and assisted him up the slimy sea stair, where he placed the senseless and dripping girl in her father's arms, and then the poor man wept as he covered her cold, wet cheek with kisses—the purest that are ever bestowed in this world; and now the shouts of "*Viva el noble caballero!*" that greeted him on all sides, so applaudingly and so vociferously, almost made Pedro Barradas believe himself the disinterested and gallant fellow the simple people believed him to be.

The young gentleman, who clung to the keel of the inverted boat, was almost immediately rescued by the crew of a brigantine, in which Pedro suddenly recognised, to his dismay, the otter-hunter; but the lady's companion was viewed with singular displeasure by all. Even the negroes ventured to mock him, for Pedro was the hero of the whole episode!

A carriage was summoned; the young lady, in whom Pedro discovered his beauty of the Matriz Church, and, who was already reviving, was placed therein, with her friend, or lover, as he appeared to be, by his excessive alarm and tenderness. Her father insisted on her preserver accompanying them, and after a little affected demur and diffidence, he gave an anxious glance at the brigantine, another at the crowd, lest some of her crew might be there, and, assenting, took his place beside Moreno.

He remembered what the Padre Eizagiuerro had said so hurriedly, that this old gentleman was the richest merchant in Santiago, the capital of Chili (of which the great city of Valparaiso is merely the port); that the girl he had saved was an *only* child.

"*Caramba!*" thought he; "I may get the daughter as well as the 2,000 *duros*. Courage, Pedro, *amigo mio*, for fortune smiles more than ever! How lucky it was that little accident occurred on board the brigantine!"

CHAPTER XIII.

IGNEZ DE MORENO.

From the mole the carriage was driven to one of the most splendid hotels in Valparaiso. Don Salvador held his daughter in his arms, and hung over her with great solicitude and affection. She soon began to open her eyes, and the swinging motion of the carriage tended to promote the circulation of the blood. She was at once committed to the care of a medical man and her own attendants, and ere Pedro had dried his garments, and imbibed a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, most favourable tidings of her recovery were brought by her father, old Don Salvador, who insisted that Pedro should stay and sup with him, promising, that if Donna Ignez were sufficiently recovered ere he left them—which there was no reason to doubt—her preserver should be introduced to her.

"Bravo!" thought Pedro, as he approvingly glanced at himself askance in a great mirror, that ascended from the marble mantelpiece under which

the gilt brassero smouldered, to the lofty frescoed ceiling; "bravo, Pedro!—so far so well!"

A supper, consisting chiefly of light dishes, fruit, and rare wines, served up in costly plate and splendid crystal, made Pedro's eyes twinkle, and ere the last flush of sunset had faded away on the Pacific, of which they had a fine view from the open windows of the hotel, they were joined by the Padres Eizagiuerro and Ugarte (whose presence Pedro could very well have spared); for the former was the confessor of Donna Ignez, and the latter was an old friend of her family.

Don Perez, the young man who had cut such a sorry figure on the keel of the inverted boat, also joined the party, but he was silent, reserved, and dissatisfied.

"Pardon me, senor," began Salvador de Moreno—a benevolent-looking old gentleman, whose silky hair was white as snow, though his face, which was noble in feature, wore a deep ruddy brown hue—"pardon me," he continued, after having expressed his gratitude in the most extravagant terms; "but may I inquire the name of a gentleman to whom my daughter owes her life, and I so much?"

Now, Pedro had not thought of a name to assume; but, with all the ready wit of a rogue, he at once foresaw that to adopt any *other* Christian cognomen than his own might prove awkward, if he

forgot it, or failed to keep his cue, so he replied:

"Don Pedro Florez de Serrano."

The old merchant bowed very low indeed, for the name sounded well, and somehow not unfamiliar.

"You have served——"

"In the navy—yes," said Pedro, hastily.

"Ah—I thought so."

"Curse his clever eyes!" thought Pedro; "there is no concealing a sailor's hands."

Ere this, he had discovered a necessity for concealing this circumstance, which had always excited suspicions of his assumed character, for his hands were, of course, browned by tar and exposure, and hardened by tallying on to ropes, cables, and capstan-bars. He resolved to invest in a box of kid gloves forthwith, and to account for his nautical bearing, said:

"I am a lieutenant in the navy of the Southern States, on parole not to serve during the war against the North. I belonged to that famous ship, the *Florida*.

Don Salvador and the two padres bowed again, while Don Perez, a pale, but rather handsome young man, on whom Pedro's sharp eye turned from time to time, stared before him straight at his wine-glass, and looked, if possible, more discontented than ever.

"Jealous already, my old friend of the Matriz Church!—ho! ho!" thought Pedro.

"As your name is Florez," said the Padre Ugarte, "may I inquire whether you are any relation of Don Florez de ——?"

Here the priest named a famous Spanish grandee. On which the adventurous Pedro promptly replied, while holding his glass to the liveried and aiguiletted servant, to be filled with hock, iced and sparkling, for the sixth time :

"I am no relation whatever, I believe—only a namesake."

"Indeed!"

"Since the death of my uncle, the Corregidor of Ciudad Rodrigo, in the old country, I have only one relation in the world."

"Ah, indeed!" remarked Padre Eizagiuerro, who seemed to be studying Pedro closely with his small, keen eyes.

"My father's cousin," he resumed, with a steady stare, which somewhat abashed the worthy ecclesiastic.

"May I inquire?" asked Perez, who had not yet spoken.

"Certainly—old Serrano, the Captain-General of Cuba."

"El Mariscal Duque de Serrano!" exclaimed Ugarte.

"Certainly—do you know him, Senor Padre?" continued Pedro, with affected carelessness, while rolling up a paper cigarito, knowing well that the truth of this bold statement would never be tested in the Republic of Chili; and though a citizen thereof, Don Salvador now bowed very low indeed, for he had enough of the old Spaniard in his disposition to have a respect, bordering on awe, for long names and long pedigrees. The priests glanced at each other doubtfully, but remained silent, for they were more acute men of the world than their worthy host.

"And how came you among us here in Chili?" asked Perez.

"Simply by a stroke of fortune, senor. My parole cuts me off indefinitely from naval employment; my cousin will do nothing for me, either in Castile or in Cuba, so I have come here to kill time by travelling, attended by a young fellow named Zuares, a faithful servant, whom I have lost; so I find myself," added Pedro, who, thanks to the tutelage of the old Bishop of Orizaba, could express himself well when he chose, "by the great shores of the Pacific without a single friend."

"Do not say so, I entreat you, Senor Don Pedro," exclaimed old Moreno, impulsively, as he shook the speaker's hands; "oh," he added, while his eyes filled, "how much do I owe you, *Madre de Dios!*—how much?"

("Two thousand dollars, my golden pigeon!" thought Pedro.)

"I shall be your friend, senor, and so must our kinsman Perez."

Don Perez mumbled some reply half in his wine-glass, for he evidently viewed our adventurer with no favourable eyes. Indeed, though loving his young cousin Ignez with all his soul, he had scarcely grace to thank Pedro for fishing her up from the bottom of the bay. Perez de Moreno was rather a handsome young man; his black hair was shorn short, and he had smart moustaches, that stuck straight out right and left, terminating in sharp points, and his costume, though provincial, became him well.

He wore a short, round jacket of dark figured silk (surtouts and swallow-tails are unknown in these regions); a rich vest of scarlet satin; a shirt open at the neck, fastened by gold studs, in the centre of each of which a diamond flashed; long, straight pantaloons of chocolate-coloured velvet, girt by a sash of yellow silk; a broad-brimmed brown beaver, encircled by a gold band; straw-coloured kid gloves, and a knife concealed somewhere, no doubt, completed his attire.

As yet not a word had been said about the dollars, and notwithstanding his chivalrous character and high connections, our friend Pedro was

getting impatient on the subject, and was very well pleased when it was referred to, with a covert sneer, by Don Perez.

"Ah, true, true, *Dios mio!* I had forgotten," exclaimed Don Salvador, producing a gilt morocco pocket-book, and opening it hastily; but Pedro, knowing well the character of the merchant, and having a deep and ultimate game in view, declined to receive a single dollar for the service rendered. Don Salvador expostulated, remonstrated, and was almost indignant, while Pedro rose fifty per cent. in the estimation of the two priests. At last, he could with difficulty, apparently, be prevailed upon "to accept, as his remittances from Charleston had been delayed," a cheque from his host, on the bank of Santiago, for 1,000 dollars.

"We leave this to-morrow for Santiago, where we reside. I should like my daughter to see you ere we go; but I find that, if she is well enough, we must start by sunrise. If you should ever visit our city, don't forget us, senor—don't forget us, I beseech you," and the old gentleman presented his card, on which was engraved the name and address:

"*Don Salvador de Moreno, Alameda de la Canada.*"

"I shall not forget, be assured, senor," said Pedro, pocketing the cheque and the card; and now,

thinking, as the lights were beginning to multiply, that the time had come when it would be prudent to take his departure, he solemnly, and with much profuse politeness, bade his intended father-in-law adieu, for in this relationship he actually viewed Don Salvador already. "I have some business to transact, about—about—but it does not matter what, so I shall not be long behind you here."

He remembered the brigantine at anchor in the bay, and resolved to quit Valparaiso without loss of time.

"*Adios,* Padre Ugarte — Padre Eizagiuerro, *adios!*" said he, waving his hat, and yawing some what in his course towards the door; "*adios,* Don Perez; don't forget to learn to swi—swi—swim. A thousand farewells to you, Don Salvador."

Fortunately the door was promptly opened by a servant, or Pedro would have lurched against its panels of plate-glass, and ere long he found himself in the street, with his back against a lamp-post, and very dim ideas of how he had quitted the hotel. Then he thought Don Perez had insulted him, and a vague notion of returning and punching that individual's head floated through his own.

The cool breeze from the Pacific partly sobered him; he wrapped his poncho round him; felt if the cheque was safe; and, then, remembering that he

was in a strange place, he searched next for his knife and revolver.

"All right—*bueno!*—he hiccuped, "now for the Posada de San Augustin. The church is just opposite the posada—no, it is the posada that is opposite the church, *amigo mio.*"

Though tipsy, he reflected that he had a heavy bill due there; but as he had not the slightest intention of liquidating it, the expenses of a night more would matter little, as he meant to depart for Santiago on the morrow and follow up his fortune there without delay.

Pedro lay long a-bed next day for divers weighty reasons. He had a crushing headache—the result of iced champagne, moselle, sherry, and brandy-punch; he had to remember all the little romances he had invented for the behoof of Don Salvador and the jealous Don Perez; he also deemed it safer to keep out of the way till nightfall—even though skilfully disguised—than to wander about Valparaiso while that devilish brigantine (he could see her from the posada windows) was anchored off the battery.

Among other things, Pedro reflected that he must get rid of Don Perez, whom he already hated as a rival.

He knew well that attentions to the fair sex must be gone warily about under the shadow of the Andes; for though the women of South America

are handsome and gay, their ideas of morality are somewhat cloudy and vague, hence the jealousy of the men is extreme, their vengeance deadly and sudden. Spanish and Indian blood make a fiery mixture in that land of earthquakes and volcanoes.

Gallantry to women, married or single, is often repaid by the bullet or stiletto of a parent or lover; and yet what a certain writer says of California suits Chili, or any other of these regions, equally well, for there the very men who would lay down their lives to avenge the honour of their own family, would risk the same lives to complete the dishonour of another.

But the intentions of Senor Don Pedro Florez de Serrano, of the Southern navy, were strictly honourable. He contemplated nothing but matrimony.

Some woman he meant to marry; whether she was a princess or a *paisano,* whether, like Ignez, the heiress of uncounted pistoles, or the pretty keeper of a *taberna,* mattered nothing to him provided she could supply all his little exigences till he grew tired of her, slipped his cable and ran off to sea again.

So now an opportunity of the most golden and unexpected kind—one favoured by fortune and those good old romantic accessories of all lovers and novelists—to wit, gratitude and adventure, had suddenly opened up to him.

It seemed that he had but to go in and win. He

was the rescuer from death of an heiress, young, beautiful, tender, and simple "as a sucking turkey," to use one of his own peculiar forecastle phrases; so he leaped from bed about mid-day, called for a long glass of brandy and potash iced, to assist in clearing his faculties, after which he began to consider in what fashion he would "levant" from the Posada de San Augustin and set out for Santiago, without seeking for his bill, to attempt which, when he had but ten dollars in hand, would only have been an insult to his worthy host, Felipe Fernandez, whom he had no desire to offend.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW PEDRO PROVIDED HIMSELF WITH A HORSE AND VALET.

Santiago lies sixty miles south-west of Valparaiso towards the Andes, a rough and hilly road. To proceed there on foot by no means suited Pedro's ideas of locomotion, while to travel by any kind of vehicle might lead to detection and other serious annoyances, so, as evening approached, and Pedro considered that old Moreno and his daughter must have had ten or twelve hours' start, he became sorely perplexed.

The sun set, the moon rose, and still Pedro was undecided.

Slowly, solemnly, and majestically that broad, round silver moon ascended from the calm waters of the Pacific. White as snow shone all the plastered streets of Valparaiso, and the sea that rolled rippling into the bay, between the embattled forts, seemed a sheet of liquid sheen; but in the blue sky her silver light struggled for supremacy with a lurid red cast—not upon the clouds, for there were none

—but upon the very ether itself, by the flames that were now shooting upward from the vast cone of Aconcagua.

From the windows of the front drawing-room, or large public saloon of the posada, which opened towards the bay, Pedro sauntered, sunk in thought and rage—perplexity always took that form with him—to those of the back, which overlooked the stable-yard, and there a violent altercation arrested his attention. It was taking place between no less a personage than Felipe Fernandez and a horseman who had just arrived.

"I have ridden from the Maypo River," said the latter, "and must put up here."

"A short distance, senor, and your horse is quite fresh," replied the host; "it is useless dismounting, as I cannot accommodate you."

"Why?" asked the other, with a malediction which sounded familiar to the ear of Pedro.

"We have no room.

"Bah! I have been told that elsewhere."

"Very likely," replied the host, drily, as he turned to retire.

"If you have no room inside, just shove a pole out of the upper window, and I'll roost on that in California fashion," urged the speaker, as he deliberately dismounted, and, taking the lasso from his saddlebow, threw it over his arm; "I must have a

bottle of wine, at least, ere I look for other diggings —*caramba.*"

This interjection made Pedro regard the stranger more closely as he passed from where he had fastened his horse, and crossed the yard in the full blaze of the moonlight. Then Barradas ground his teeth as he recognised Cramply Hawkshaw, whom he had not met since that afternoon of crime in the Barranca Secca; and he was quite as much enraged and bewildered on seeing Hawkshaw there in the Posada de San Augustin as that personage had been on beholding him when perched on the yard-arm of the *Hermione,* on that evening after she left London.

But Pedro's measures were rapidly taken; already he heard the footsteps of him he must avoid ascending the broad marble-staircase of the hotel! Save his poncho, knife, and revolver, Pedro had no luggage that he cared about, so he thrust the weapons in his sash, threw the poncho over his shoulders, stuck his sombrero fiercely on his head, and brushed past Hawkshaw just as that person entered the room.

Descending quickly to the stable-yard, Pedro went straight to where Hawkshaw's horse was standing in shadow, and after deliberately giving a glance at the bit and bridle, and lengthening the stirrup-leathers, to suit himself, he mounted, rode

softly out of the stable-yard, and before Captain Hawkshaw, late of the Texan Partisan Rangers, had finished his wine, and had another expostulation with the *maestro de casa*, who either knew him of old, or disliked his trapper-like equipment, Pedro was fully three miles from Valparaiso, and was ascending, at a slow pace, of course, the steep and winding path which led to one of the many ravines in the mountain range that overhangs the city.

The horse had come from the Maypo River that day, as Hawkshaw stated; but it was strong and active, being one of that degenerated breed of Spanish chargers, which are to be met with, sometimes in herds of 10,000, on the vast plains which extend from the shores of La Plata to the mountains of Patagonia. His head was broad; his legs clumsy; he was long-eared, rough-coated, and of a chestnut bay colour; but, like his brethren of the grassy prairies, he was possessed of great strength and spirit, and thus ascended the rough mountain path with unflagging zeal; but not so quickly as to prevent another horse, whose hoofs were heard behind, from gaining on him as they entered the ravine in the hills, where their galloping was re-echoed by the overhanging volcanic rocks.

Pedro's hasty flight, together with the disappearance of the horse of the unwelcome visitor, who

now stormed, and threatened to complain to the nearest alcalde, having excited the suspicion of the host, and a gust of rage in the breast of Hawkshaw, the latter, on hearing of the ponderous and immovable trunk, suggested that it should at once be examined, for, being aware of every species of trick under the sun, he at once suspected that it was full alone of emptiness.

Promptly acting on this alarming suggestion, Fernandez burst it open, and then nothing was seen in it, save the heads of the screws that secured it to the floor. He tore his hair, said many irreverent things of poor San Augustin, the patron of his posada, and leaping on one of his own horses, after a few inquiries, started in pursuit of the runaway along the Santiago road.

His horse being one of those which are imported from San Domingo, was of pure Castilian breeding, and rapidly overtook the Chilian nag ridden by Pedro, whom Fernandez soon recognised in the moonlight, as he jogged along, with his toes turned out and his elbows squared, and whom he summoned to stop, just as they gained the wildest part of the ravine, where the hills overhung it darkly, though at its western end, far down below, could be seen white Valparaiso, its deep-blue bay and shipping, its lighted thoroughfares, its spires and convents, spread out like a fairy map in the silver sheen.

"Hollo!" answered Pedro, reining up, "who are you that follow a gentleman thus, shouting on the road like a drunken Indian? What—is it you, Senor Fernandez?"

"Yes, 'tis I," replied the landlord, breathless alike with rage and his hasty ride, yet resolving to dissemble a little; "permit me to expostulate with you, senor, on the double mistake you have committed."

"Mistake—I?"

"Yes, senor!"

"Explain yourself, and quickly too," replied Pedro, fiercely, as he grasped the revolver under his poncho.

"You have taken a stranger's horse from my house, and departed without paying the bill."

"I have left baggage, fellow," Pedro was beginning, with great loftiness.

"Only an empty box," interrupted Fernandez, but with rather a quavering voice, when remembering with deep mortification that he had come on this errand *unarmed*.

"You know Don Salvador de Moreno?"

"Perfectly."

"I have here a cheque of his for a large sum, sir," said Pedro, producing the old merchant's stamped paper. "What change have you about you?"

"I regret, senor, that I have only twenty pistoles," said the landlord, with sudden affability; "yes—just twenty, and a few dollars."

"All of which I require you to hand over instantly, or I shall send this bullet through your brain!" cried Pedro, with an oath, as he levelled the revolver full at the head of the startled Fernandez.

The latter saw the steel barrel glittering in the moonlight; he saw the caps on the breech; and he saw, too, that there was no misunderstanding the fierce glitter in the eyes of Pedro. The path was lonely, and no aid was nigh.

"*Presto!*" roared Pedro; "I have no time to spare."

With a reluctance that was no way feigned, Fernandez gave his purse, which Pedro thrust into his pocket.

"Now, senor," said Fernandez, "I beseech you to give me the horse, for which I must account to Captain Hawkshaw, as he left it on my premises."

Pedro laughed aloud on hearing this request.

"Harkye, shipmate, he rides seldom who only rides borrowed horses; so I ride seldom, and, being a sailor, don't overlike it. Captain Hawkshaw is an old friend of mine, and may find his horse if he inquires at Quillota." (This was said to mislead the landlord as to his route.) "All my little mistakes

are rectified now, I think, eh ? *Adios !* I shall always recommend the Posada de San Augustin to my friends. Your cooking is admirable, your wines ditto. Be assured alike of my boundless custom and most distinguished consideration when next I visit your beautiful city of Valparaiso."

And thus bantering, the ruffian rode off, leaving Fernandez, speechless with rage, to retrace his steps or enjoy the moonlight among the mountains, as he chose, on very bad terms, however, with his patron, San Augustin, whom he believed had handed him over to the Evil One.

Pedro's horse, if not swift, had good mettle in him, and trotted steadily eastward up the ascent, towards the higher ranges of hills, and ere long no less than four volcanic peaks were visible, all flaming at once, like the cones of a mighty natural furnace, and casting from afar off a glow of fire even to the zenith.

At midnight, the moonshine was still glorious. Pedro had ridden more than half-way to Santiago—thirty miles—so he stopped to rest himself, rather than the poor horse, in a little dell amid groves of mimosa trees, where parroquets, flame-coloured and green, chattered amid the branches; where the tall ceibas, or cotton-wood timber, cast their shadows on a deep and reedy lagune, whereon the giant water-flowers of that tropical region floated, and where,

for coolness, the picaflor, or little humming-bird, nestled in their cups by day.

Though a South American, Pedro, as a seaman, had been long unused to the saddle. He felt as if all his bones had been mangled; wearily he threw the bridle over the stump of a broken tree, and stretched himself on the grass, while his nag drank of the lagune.

On the whole, Pedro was greatly pleased with himself. He had Don Salvador's bill for 1,000 dollars; he had ten dollars yet remaining of the plunder from the brigantine, and he had twenty pistoles and four dollars just taken from Fernandez. Then there was Hawkshaw's horse, which, with its furniture, he valued at 500 more.

"*Vamas!*" thought he; "at this rate I shall soón realise a fortune."

While Pedro was thus casting up this little sum, gained by his industry, he did not perceive a dark, lithe, and athletic young fellow, who had been lurking among the luxuriant weeds, and who now stole stealthily towards him, with a knife glittering in his hand; and little thought Pedro that the clink of his ill-gotten pistoles had been overheard.

This stealthy personage wore a red baize shirt, a yellow poncho cloak, or *surreppa,* an old-fashioned Spanish hat, much broken and bruised, and long brown leather leggings.

He had a calf-skin girdle, fastened to which by a thong the sheath of his knife was dangling, beside an Indian *bota*, or drinking-flask.

Gliding like a serpent or eel, he was close to Pedro, ere a sound made the latter turn sharply, with instinctive caution.

Each uttered an imprecation—an expletive not to be found in Johnson or Walker—there was a gleam of the lurker's knife, and a flash of Pedro's pistol, as they closed suddenly, and, without harming each other, suddenly drew back.

"Pedro!"

"Zuares!"

Such were the exclamations that escaped the lips of these worthies, just in time to prevent a little culpable fratricide.

The brothers now exchanged an account of their adventures since they had scuttled the boat of the brigantine at the harbour of the Almendral, and separated, each to shift for himself.

Those of Zuares were very simple, being merely the breaking of all the commandments, and spending his dollars in such a fashion that the atmosphere of Valparaiso became too hot for his comfort, and he was now travelling inland, to avoid the chance of being legally garotted in a city where there was no Sangrado equalling our friend Heriot in a skill calculated to baffle even Calcraft.

But Pedro's narrative and intentions filled Zuares with genuine admiration and envy of his brother, the part of whose valet he promptly resolved to personate, in the prosecution of their scheme upon the funds and family of Don Salvador de Moreno, the account of whose simplicity, together with the beauty of Donna Ignez, he vowed to be quite delightful.

"Of course. *Corpo Santo!* a rich man's only daughter is always lovely," said Pedro; "but now, Zuares, *hermano mio*, you must remember all I have said, particularly about our—I mean *my* noble relatives."

"I have spelt them all over, I think. There is Serrano, Captain-General of Ciudad Rodrigo, and your cousin, Don Florez, who is alcalde of Cuba——"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Pedro; "at this rate you will play the devil with me. I am Don Pedro Florez de Serrano, cousin to the Captain-General of Cuba; my late uncle was corregidor of Ciudad Rodrigo, as rich and as pious as you please."

"And you—you are——"

"A lieutenant of the Southern Navy on parole; which will account for my brown hands, and other shortcomings in the matter of gentility. You——"

"I am a most attached and faithful servant."

"A regular Sancho. You have your cue?"

"*Por vida del demonio,* what a game!"

"*Glorioso! Vamos* (come)!"

And the two rascals laughed heartily as they resumed the road that led to Santiago, chatting, and fraternally riding by turns the horse of Hawkshaw, which now, poor animal, began to droop its head and ears in weariness.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ALAMEDA DE LA CANADA.

"THAT Fortune is not nice in her morality," says Maria Edgeworth; "that she frequently favours those who do not adhere to truth more than those who do, we have early had occasion to observe. But whether fortune may not be in this, as in all the rest, treacherous and capricious—whether she may not by her first smiles and favours, lure her victims to their cost, to their utter undoing at last, remains to be seen."

And so it remains to be seen how far the blind goddess favoured Pedro and his well-beloved brother, Zuares.

Towards the close of the next day, they drew near the great city of Santiago, and meeting a muleteer, who was travelling towards Quillota, with a train of mules, laden with jerked beef and hemp, they further improved their financial resources by selling to him the horse of Hawkshaw, with bridle and saddle, for 100 dollars, and the muleteer was too well pleased with his bargain to make any particular

inquiries respecting it; but took the precaution, after he left the sellers, to halt in the first peach grove, and shear off the horse's mane, dock his tail and forelock, and otherwise disguise him.

On entering Santiago, to avoid any further mistakes, Pedro proceeded at once to get Don Salvador's cheque turned into hard cash of the Chilian Republic. Then he had the somewhat picturesque costume of Zuares changed for a handsome suit of Spanish livery; and, thirdly, he betook himself to the Alameda de la Canada, just as the streets were being lighted, in search of the house of the Morenos.

The Alameda of Santiago is, perhaps, the most magnificent promenade in any of the South American cities. It is more than 150 years old. Measuring 1,000 yards in length, it is divided into three stately walks, on each side of which runs a carriage-way. There are also three canals, which intersect it, and six rows of gigantic poplars.

Here is also the ancient convent of St. Francis, with a church built of pure white stone, having a lofty steeple, from the galleries of which may be seen the fertile vale that stretches to the base of the Andes—the land of gold and of fire.

The stone seats were all occupied by ladies. All were gay, and many of them were beautiful. Their lace mantillas were all thrown back, to float over

their shoulders, for the evening was warm, and all their large feather fans were at work.

Gentlemen in sombreros hovered round their seats in hundreds, and the fine band of a Lancer regiment of the Chilian Republic played near the octagon fountain, at the foot of the centre walk, and filled the ambient air with the strains of "Il Trovatore."

The December evening was lovely, as well as warm (the thermometer rises to 85 degrees there in January), and the yellow glory of the set sun yet lingered on the giant summits of the snow-clad Andes, shaded off into saffron, purple, and dark blue in the ravines and valleys, through which roll those rivers that mingle their gold-dust with the sand on the shores of the Pacific—the Rio Monte and the Aconcagua, whose banks are bordered by groves of the orange, the fig, the peach, and the pomegranate, for in Chili the land teems with all that can minister to luxury and to wealth.

Accompanied by his valet, who walked at a respectful distance behind, bearing his poncho and umbrella, our acquaintance, Don Pedro Florez, walked along the Alameda, with a cigar in his mouth, his sombrero stuck very much over his right eye, and both hands thrust into his trousers pockets. He peered or leered into the faces of all the ladies with an air of assurance that he might not have adopted, had he and Zuares not recently dined. He

inquired of a water-carrier for the mansion of Don Salvador, and it was speedily pointed out to him.

"*Demonio!*" thought Pedro, as he ascended the broad flight of marble steps in front; "it is a regular palace, this! And what if Donna Ignez should have been too ill to travel after her cold bath?—she may be still at Valparaiso."

Pedro was somewhat scared, and Zuares was so completely, by the magnitude and magnificent aspect of the mansion, the door of which was open, revealing a lighted vestibule, and lamps were shining through nearly all of its lofty windows. The balconies were richly gilded; the Venetian blinds were all up, and thus the rich curtains, the draperies, and gilded ceilings of the apartments could be seen from the Alameda.

Don Salvador was at home.

Pedro took his cloak from his valet, whom he told, with great condescension, to amuse himself for the remainder of the evening at the dancing-rooms, but to be at their hotel before midnight. Zuares touched his hat, with his tongue in his cheek, while his brother was ushered into the *ante-cámera*, or drawing-room, where Don Salvador, Don Perez, and Padre Eizagiuerro (whom he could very well have spared) received him with great politeness; but the first alone with any cordiality.

Coffee and chocolate were being served round,

and Donna Ignez came forward, blushing and smiling, to be presented to her "brave preserver."

She was, evidently, of pure Spanish blood; her pale brunette complexion showing clearly that there was no native mixture in her blue veins; while her eyes, and their lashes and brows, were black as night.

As Pedro surveyed the girl's pure loveliness, not her least attractions seemed to be her necklace, her long pendant ear-rings, her bracelets, and high Spanish comb, all *en suite*—all blood-red rubies, which sparkled all the brighter for the snowy pearls that mingled with them in settings of richly-chased gold, for Pedro Barradas had the eye and heart of a pirate.

Two sisters of the pale and discontented Don Perez were present—Donna Erminia, a tall and magnificent girl (whose broad white shoulders and large proportions made Pedro wish that she had been the merchant's daughter), and little Donna Paula, who was only some ten years old or so, but who seemed a miniature edition of Erminia, with a high comb, fan, and veil, a demure little face, and calm, black, inquiring eyes. She sat on a velvet hassock near the knee of Don Salvador, with whom she was an especial favourite.

All unused to society such as this, Pedro was sorely abashed for a time, till his natural impudence came to his aid. His past education, and his service

as a boy in the cathedral church of Orizaba, he now recalled with success, and the knowledge he had gained of clerical matters, served him in his endeavours to cast "dust in the eyes" of the Padre Eizagiuerro as to his real character, and yet, withal, the priest mistrusted him.

He saw that there was something unreal about this Don Pedro—that he was not a gentleman of Spain, or any other place; and as for the Padre Ugarte, he suspected something worse than mere imposture. Yet, veiling the native ferocity of his character, Pedro was now humble, fawning, and discreet—oh! exceedingly discreet! He had a great game to play—a rich end in view.

"We met, senor, once before that accident," said Donna Ignez, looking up with a bright smile in her soft eyes.

"Yes, senora," replied Pedro.

"At the Matriz Church—ah, you remember!"

"Could I ever forget?" was the gallant response.

"And the sermon?"

"It was divine," said Pedro, in a low voice, but yet distinct enough to reach the ear of the padre.

So now they were friends at once, to an extent that cousin Perez could neither understand nor relish.

Though, when inflamed by his potations, a mad ruffian, as we have shown by his proceedings on

board the *Hermione,* Pedro was not altogether destitute of the subtle art of winning female favour —the art in which his father excelled so fatally, and which was the only inheritance he had left him—so he exerted every energy to please the fair young Ignez, and to use with industry the time that fortune gave him.

So, after detailing a very bloody engagement between the ships of the Federals and Confederates, in which he alleged he was wounded and left for dead on the enemy's deck, he suddenly affected to discover a new source for deep interest in Donna Ignez—a close and most remarkable resemblance which she bore to "a sister, whom he loved dearly."

"Where does she reside?" asked Donna Erminia; "in Spain?"

"Dear old Spain, of which papa talks so much," added her cousin Ignez.

"Alas! no," said Pedro, beginning to cudgel his invention.

"Is she dead?" asked Ignez, gently.

"No."

"Then she must be married, of course?" said little Donna Paula, fanning herself with all the air of her great-grandmother.

"No—she became a nun, in spite of my advice," said Pedro, sighing; "one of the sisters of Santa Clara."

"Where, senor?" asked Erminia; "we are very curious, you see; but it is the privilege of our sex."

"At Orizaba; and it was long before our good friend, the bishop, who was her godfather——"

"Ah, you know the Bishop of Orizaba, do you, senor?" said the Padre Eizagiuerro, coming suddenly forward.

"Perfectly, padre," replied Pedro, wishing his tongue had been bitten off.

"Probably you have heard the story of the miraculous image, which came back to the cathedral in the night?"

"Yes; but at that time I was on board the *Florida*."

"I have just had a letter from the bishop about it."

"Indeed, padre," stammered Pedro, beginning to feel far from comfortable, as the padre began to search the pockets of his soutan.

"Dear me—dear me——where can I have put it? —he is an old college friend of mine—I have left it in my vestry; but, senor, you will be glad to learn that they have now distinct traces of the impious thief, who so sacrilegiously stole the thirteen diamond stars and the golden aureole from the holy image of Our Lady."

Pedro, who had hitherto been piling falsehood upon falsehood, winced at this communication, and

felt himself grow pale; but, to his infinite relief, the padre turned away to address Don Salvador.

"Talking of thieves, ladies," said Pedro, "I had a robber encounter last night, on the hills above Valparaiso."

"An encounter—*Madre de Dios*—of what nature?"

And, thereupon, Pedro proceeded to detail a very spirited scuffle, in which he must have perished, as he had at least fifteen assailants, but for the unexpected arrival of his servant, the faithful Zuares.

"The man you lost at Valparaiso, senor?" said Moreno.

"Exactly—the same brave fellow."

"Oh, Don Pedro, this is romance upon romance!" exclaimed Ignez, as, with two very white hands, she smoothed back the dark masses of her magnificent hair, evidently greatly pleased with the impostor, to whose rhodomontades she listened as a charming and romantic young lady, whose life has just been saved by a striking, athletic, and imposing dark stranger, may be supposed to do.

Her cousin and *fiancé*, who had clung for life or death to the keel of the pinnace, which he had overset by mismanagement, was fearfully at a discount—even little Donna Paula did not mind him a bit; and of this state of matters Don Pedro Florez, cousin of the Marshal Duke de Serrano, hastened to make the best use, for he could temper his assur-

ance with vast art when he chose, affecting actually to be timid and shy—he "had always been so, when studying at Salamanca," as he whispered to Ignez, when seated at the piano.

He soon cherished a love (if we may call it so) for this unsuspecting girl; but, like the love that Hawkshaw bore for Ethel Basset, the lust of lucre was its basis—recklessness and obstinacy did the rest.

On the other hand, a long, weary, and somewhat tame engagement with her cousin—an understood affair, that had lasted all her girlhood—rendered Ignez, perhaps, more open to the advances of a stranger, by the very novelty of his attentions.

After making an appointment to drive with the whole party to the beautiful valley of Mepooho next day, Pedro returned to his hotel extremely well pleased with himself, and just in time to prevent Zuares, who had been imbibing too freely in the Recoba, or market-place, from being carried off by the horse-police, for drawing his knife on the waiters, kissing the chambermaids, and other little eccentricities.

Pedro made such admirable use of the opportunities afforded by that expedition to the valley, and others, in which the young ladies took him to see the Jesuits' Church, the Chapel of Our Lady del Rosario, the great Church of La Campagnia, and

other public sights, that he had thrice spoken of love to Ignez, who only blushed and smiled, but did not forbid him, or seek to avoid the subject, unless when Perez or her father were within hearing, when a quick warning glance from her charming eyes withheld him. Thus the heedless girl, unfortunately for herself, established with him a species of secret understanding, which made Pedro conceive a very daring scheme indeed—to compel her to become his by a *coup-de-main*, as he dreaded the result of the padre's correspondence with the bishop, and an exposure of his escapade at the Posada de San Augustin.

More than one painful and unpleasant scene ensued between Ignez and her cousin Perez now. She was piqued, and he was furious; hence the coldness that ensued between them favoured the adventurous Pedro. Yet poor Don Perez loved the wilful girl to distraction, as the phrase is.

He was too feeble to compete in bodily strength with such a bulky ruffian as Pedro, and was too honourable to resort to secret means of getting rid of him. Failing with Ignez herself, he disdained to apply for the intervention of her father's authority, and yet he saw daily, yea, hourly, how, misled by her imagination alone, the heart of his beautiful cousin was being corrupted, warped and turned from him.

"Why is this?—how is this?—answer me, Ignez?" he once asked her, imploringly.

"He saved me," said she, with her sweet face half averted from him, "when you left me to perish."

"Ignez!" exclaimed the young man, in a voice of shame and agony.

"It is true, cousin Perez."

"I cannot swim—I have told you so a hundred times."

"Then you should learn, my poor Perez."

"I could but shout for succour."

"And *he* came!" she said, with heaving breast and flashing eyes.

"Unless assisted by Heaven, I could not have saved you, dear, dear Ignez," said he, almost in tears.

"Then you should have perished with me, if you loved me."

"*If I loved you!*" he repeated, in sorrowful reproach; "but what need was there for perishing, when I saw succour coming?"

"You saw him—you saw him who saved me," continued the pitiless little beauty, with each reply planting an arrow in the heart of poor Perez.

"He saved you for the bribe of a thousand dollars!" said he, scornfully; "all on the mole heard that plain enough."

"In vain do you enviously seek to detract from him, cousin Perez. He saved me for myself—perhaps for himself too," was the still more cutting rejoinder.

"Enough, Senora de Moreno," said Perez, in a towering passion; "I shall yet unmask this piccaroon—this wretched impostor, if to do so should cost me half my fortune!"

As Perez uttered this threat, and retired by one door of the drawing-room, it chanced that the redoubtable and interesting Don Pedro Florez de Serrano entered by another, and these words, which he heard distinctly enough, made that worthy cavalier feel very much as if in a Californian vapour bath—the hottest of such contrivances; and he felt, moreover, there was no time to be lost in getting rid of Don Perez, and bringing matters to an issue with Ignez de Moreno.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DRESSING-CLOSET OF IGNEZ.

During these proceedings, Don Perez had many conferences with the two priests.

Padre Eizagiuerro, the confessor of Ignez, suspected much, but Padre Ugarte, a stern and ascetic enthusiast, suspected, and said more; for he openly inveighed against the simplicity of Don Salvador, in believing all the fine things Pedro said about his relations in Spain, and his ample possessions on the table land of Anahuac, as contrasted with his cupidity on the mole, before he would consent to save the drowning girl's life.

"A seaman! he—a Confederate officer! was such the conduct of either?" exclaimed the Nuncio.

"But he refused, my dear padre, he flatly refused to receive the 2,000 dollars!" urged Moreno, who was too simple and too full of gratitude to suspect Pedro.

"Refuse—ha! ha!"

"Yes."

"Acting all—acting all!" said Ugarte, a sharp observer of men and things.

"But for him, I should to-night have been a poor old childless man," replied Moreno.

Perez and they employed an *escribano*, who had correspondents in various quarters, and ere long he gathered strange tidings of Pedro. The bishop of Orizaba and the *escribano*, who had been robbed in the Barranca Secca, the mate of the otter-hunter, Hawkshaw, and the keeper of the Posada De San Augustin, with others, were all written to—the strands of evidence being untwisted as a lawyer alone could discover and untwist them; telegraph and railway appliances were all at work; and thus, all unknown to Pedro and Zuares, who were already under the surveillance of the alguazils, a network of evidence was closing round them.

The day had been mild and warm for December —February being the hottest month of the year at Santiago—and Donna Ignez had retired early to her own apartments. All day she had been busy with Donna Erminia, little Donna Paula, and other ladies, in preparing artificial flowers and lanterns for the grand religious festival, which was to be held in the Church of La Campagnia, wherein the Padre Ugarte and Eizagiuerra, the Nuncio, were to officiate, a festival which was looked forward to with the deepest interest by all in Santiago.

Seated before the mirror, with all her fine dark hair floating in rippling masses upon her smooth white shoulders, the girl was lingering, ere she proceeded further to undress, and seemed disposed to muse, and to gaze at the reflection of her own charming figure, while she repeated, re-acted, and reconsidered with a soft, dreamy smile on her lips and in her eyes, all that had passed of late between herself and Pedro; and to think, with a sigh, of what her papa's views might be, when he came to hear that their visitor had adopted the character of an avowed lover—that she was on bad terms with cousin Perez, had well-nigh quarrelled with him, and dismissed him!

These thoughts rather agitated the little beauty, and so immersed was she in them that she did not hear a light step on the gilded balcony outside her window, which was yet partly unclosed, nor did she hear the sash pushed open, as a man cautiously entered her apartment, and stood for a minute surveying her with an expression of admiration, that on this occasion was in no way feigned.

This nocturnal visitor was no other than Pedro, who, in the course of casual conversation, had cunningly discovered from Ignez the locality of her sleeping-place, and who, after supping with Don Salvador, had taken an additional bottle of wine at a *taberna* with Zuares, and returned to the house on

the Alameda. Then, selecting the window of Ignez, he had cast his lasso over the balcony and swung himself up, hand over hand, in a manner which his past nautical experiences rendered easy enough.

He approached slowly and stealthily, dreading an outcry when she discovered him. He had but two ideas. One was to persuade her to elope with him; the other was the hope that she might so far compromise herself that marriage alone could save her honour. Cautious in all his proceedings, he had gathered the lasso in his hand, for to leave it dangling into the street might have attracted attention, and caused premature discovery. Behind one of the poplars in the Alameda, Zuares sat crouching on his hams, and watching like a lynx.

Pedro was within a pace of Ignez when she started, and her dark eyes dilated as she saw his form appear behind her own, reflected in the mirror; but, ere a cry could escape her parting lips, he threw his arms around her, and stifled it with a kiss.

"Pedro—Don Pedro!" she exclaimed, in a voice of agitation and terror.

"Yes, Ignez, 'tis I! *Nina mi alma*—'tis I."

This forecastle phrase, which means literally, "my little honey," by no means reassured her.

"How—what does this mean?" she asked, angrily.

"It means that—that my love, Ignez, can neither tolerate absence nor delay."

"Delay!" she faltered, while gathering up her hair, by which she displayed a very taper waist, and two polished elbows.

"I dread alike the wiles and enmity of your cousin Perez, and that devil of a Padre Eizagiuerro, with many others who dislike me, and I have come hither to-night that we may be sèparated no more."

"What am I to understand by all this, senor?" asked the girl, with increasing agitation.

"Does not your own heart tell you?" asked Pedro, embracing her.

"*O madre de Dios*—what is all this I hear?" she exclaimed, while flushing and palpitating in his arms, and glancing nervously at the door.

"*Demonio*—I forget what I am about!" muttered Pedro, as he hastened to the door, and softly turned the key.

"Leave me—retire as you came. Leave me, if you hope for pardon—if you would not wish to see me die at your feet, Don Pedro," said Ignez, gathering her energies, and gazing at him with a glance which was very loving and imploring, though there was something in Pedro's aspect now, flushed as he was with wine and presumptuous hopes, that almost terrified her; for his features seemed unusually coarse and swollen, and his eyes wore a very wild

expression. "Leave me," she repeated, "or I shall be compelled to cry for aid; my father's room is not very far from this."

Pedro laughed.

"Senora," said he, "you forget that your reputation is at stake if you utter an outcry, and I am thus discovered—so kiss me, and be quiet, will you? Were it known that a man was in your bed-room, even for ten minutes, all Santiago would ring with it to-morrow; and think of the fuss there would be about it on the Alameda. How the Padre Eizagiuerro would raise his eyebrows, and the Padre Ugarte his voice; how Donna Erminia would shrug her white shoulders; and what would old papa Salvador de Moreno say of it? So, my little beauty, my darling Ignez, be quiet pray, for all our sakes. Come, *mi queredita,* sit on my knee, and I shall soon teach you to love me with all your heart."

But Pedro's words—the very picture of shame and exposure which his banter unwittingly portrayed—instead of answering his purpose, fully recalled the young lady to herself, and a sense of her danger.

The regard she bore him in her impulsive breast first filled her eyes with tears of sorrow, that he should dare to act thus, and then they flashed with indignation that Pedro should conceive a scheme so disastrous.

"If you love me, as you say, Don Pedro, I beseech you to retire," she said, sternly.

"It is because I do love you as I say, that I am here," urged Pedro, making another effort to clasp her in his arms.

But she eluded him, and in a voice there was no mistaking—low, subdued, and full of angry determination, she replied:

"Begone, senor, or by the soul of my mother, I shall summon my father, and he always sleeps with fire-arms at hand."

"*Demonio!* what a little spitfire it is."

At that moment there was a loud knock on the chamber-door.

"Who is there?" asked Ignez, growing deadly pale, and sickening with the thought of the false position in which Pedro had placed her.

"Open, Ignez," said the voice of Don Salvador, "'Tis I, your father."

"What is the matter, senor?" asked Ignez, almost sinking with distress.

"A man has been seen to enter the house!"

"A man!"

"So your cousin Perez tells me." At this name Pedro ground his teeth, and felt for his knife.

"We have searched for him everywhere, save here, and we must assure ourselves that your rooms are safe; open."

"In one moment, dearest papa," replied Ignez, pointing to the window, pale and trembling, her dark eyes flashing, her curved nostrils quivering; but instead of retiring as he had entered, Pedro snatched up his lasso, darted into a little closet, the door of which was open, and concealed himself among the cloaks, dresses, and other garments, which hung from pegs upon the wall.

This was the bath-room of Ignez, and a *brazero* of lighted charcoal was smouldering on the floor. This seriously incommoded Pedro, who remained ensconced in the little apartment, bitterly repenting the whole adventure, by which his safety was compromised, and his hopes, perhaps, dashed for ever. So he crouched and listened, with his hand on the haft of his knife, ready to spring forth and kill Don Salvador—even Ignez herself, if it were necessary—for whenever he was at bay, or caught in his own toils, the cruel impulses of his savage heart gained their fullest sway.

"I have heard or seen nothing to cause alarm, papa," said Ignez, whose colourless face was closely scanned by Don Perez, as he looked round the apartment and over the balcony.

"It is very odd," said Don Salvador; "but as Perez passed homeward he saw a man enter the house. I will report the affair to the alguazil-mayor, for we have searched everywhere, and can find no

trace of the fellow. I am sorry we have disturbed you, my child, when weary, as you must be with your day's work at La Campagnia," he added, while half-cocking his pistols. "But good-night, darling, and pleasant dreams to you."

"We have not searched this closet," said Perez, whose pallor exceeded that of Inez, and her heart seemed to die within her, as he opened the dressing-room door. "Faugh!" he added, "such a smell of charcoal. My dear Ignez, you should be careful with that *brazero*."

He then *locked* the door.

"Come, Perez," said old Moreno, "Ignez looks pale."

"May I speak with her for one minute, my dear senor, and will you wait for me in the billiard-room?"

"Certainly, my dear boy; but don't stay long," said the old gentleman, as he smilingly retired.

Ignez gazed anxiously, almost with a haggard aspect, at her cousin, and then her eyes wandered furtively towards the door of the fatal closet.

"Ignez," said Perez, trembling in spite of himself.

"Cousin!"

"There is a man in that closet."

Her dismay was now overwhelming, for it was combined with a shame and terror against which even her pure innocence failed to support her.

"Oh, Perez, my cousin, dare you accuse—dare you suspect——"

"I suspect and accuse you of nothing, Oh Ignez! God forbid, though I have suffered much of late. But a villain whom I do suspect has concealed himself for some nefarious purpose in your dressing-closet. On looking in I saw his feet, and he must be got rid of quietly, for not a breath must stain the reputation of you, my dearest Ignez. Leave me to act," continued Perez, as he opened the closet door and cocked a pistol. "Come forth," said he; "you are discovered, Don Pedro. Come forth instantly, and in silence too."

There was no reply, but the body of Pedro was seen extended at length on the floor! He was in a state of exhaustion—overcome by his recent potations at the *taberno*, combined with the noxious fumes of the charcoal from the *brazero*.

Perez kicked him with his foot, and smiled grimly.

"I told you, my dear cousin, to be careful with that *brazero*. Luckily there is no moon, the night is cloudy, and this carrion may recover his senses in the cool Alameda."

Pale as death, bewildered and terrified, Ignez gazed on the prostrate figure, and on those features which seemed to be convulsed by the throes of death.

Don Perez tied the lasso under the arms of Pedro,

and dragging his body to the balcony, after carefully ascertaining that there was no one in the street, with no small exertion (for the lad was slight though wiry) he hoisted the bulky intruder over the iron railing, and lowered him to the ground—not very tenderly, perhaps. He then dropped the lasso after its proprietor, carefully closed and secured the window-sashes, kissed his passive cousin, and bidding her good night, retired.

At that moment the great bell of the church of La Campagnia (which was already beginning to be lighted up with its countless lamps, for the great festival of the morrow) tolled the hour of twelve. Every stroke sounded like a knell in the soul of Ignez, and she burst into tears.

She was guiltless, and he had not suspected her; yet in her innocent heart she felt terrified like one who unwittingly has committed a great crime. Oh, that Padre Eizagiuerro were here, that she might confide it all to him, and solicit his advice!

Was that the man who had so lately poured his daring love speeches into her ears, and who had striven to embrace her—he whom she had seen Perez dragging forth, with an air of such mingled anger and satisfaction—dying or dead?

She dared not peep forth to satisfy the curiosity that consumed her. Had she done so, about one hour after Pedro was lowered over the balcony, she

might have seen him walking slowly away, leaning on the arm of Zuares.

The cool night breeze in the open Alameda had revived him; but the fumes of the *brazero* in that little closet were nearly being the means of cutting short the career of Pedro Barradas, and so saving us, and many others, a vast deal of trouble.

On this night, the sleep of Ignez was far from being a peaceful one.

Perez slept like a dormouse. He was happy, and his first thought in the morning was to open sundry letters and telegrams from Valparaiso.

"Oho, Don Pedro Florez de Serrano!" he exclaimed, "lieutenant of the *Florida*, in the naval service of the States, on his parole of honour, cousin of the Captain-General of Cuba, nephew of the Corregidor of Ciudad Rodrigo, student of Salamanca, and the devil only knows all what more, so we have caught you, have we? *Bueno viva!*"

And the young man, as he drank his coffee and lit a cigar, laughed loudly.

How little could he foresee the awful events of the night that were to follow!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREAT CRIME OF PEDRO BARRADAS.

In the cool night breeze, that swept through the Alameda de la Canada, Pedro had recovered consciousness, but he had no conception of how he came to be there, nor had he a recollection of anything that had occurred after he darted into the dressing-closet of Ignez. He could remember that an overpowering sleep fell upon him, and that was all.

During the day he was too unwell to visit the house of the Morenos; but he hoped to meet Donna Ignez, with the rest of her family, at the great festival in the Church of La Campagnia, when, doubtless, she would be able to explain all to him.

"You are sure that matters are all right with this girl?" asked Zuares, doubtfully, for he had seen a man lowering what he at first supposed to be his brother's dead body over the balcony.

"Right—of course. *Vamos!* it is a clear case with her now."

"Clear case of what?"

"Of going into consumption, or into a convent, if she does not marry me," replied Pedro, who, however, was not without some unpleasant doubts himself, when remembering the unconcealed anger and vexation exhibited by Ignez last night; "but, Zuares, do you know that this old fellow——"

"Who?"

"Don Salvador de Moreno——"

"Well?"

"Possesses one of the thirty-four gold mines in the Curacy of Colina, with one of the *laverados* on the mountain of Giundo?"

"Is it a bath?" asked Zuares.

"No, you fool!" replied Pedro, angrily.

"'Whoso calleth his brother a fool——'"

"'Is in danger of hell-fire!' Bah! I learnt all that long ago at Orizaba."

"Well—and this *laverado?*"

"Is a place where the gold-dust is washed from the sand. Ignez shall be heiress of as many pistoles as would fill yonder brigantine to the beams."

"*Bueno!* then we shall see what we shall see. I am beginning to tire of this kind of life, and long for salt-water again."

The night of the 8th December drew on, and Pedro, with his brother, were among the first who repaired to the Plazuela de la Campagnia. Long before the doors of the vast church were open,

hundreds of splendid carriages, rolling from all quarters of the city, deposited ladies in rich summer dresses and ample crinolines—large beyond any that we see in Europe—at the high-arched portal, through which, and through every window of that lofty pile, there glared a marvellous blaze of light, for the edifice had been illuminated with a splendour never seen before. Consequently the excitement in Santiago was great, and great was the competition among the wealthy and well-born to procure admission.

It was the great festival of the Immaculate Conception, and more than 20,000 lights and lamps, of every brilliant colour, mostly camphine, garlanded the pillars, encircled the arches, lined the cornices, or were festooned across the great church, and so many coloured globes were used on this occasion, that the whole interior resembled a hall of dazzling fire. All was light and radiance—there could be no shadow anywhere.

The great altar was a veritable pyramid of light, amid which there shone a marvellous image of the Madonna, copied from Murillo's famous picture. Her eyes were turned to heaven, her hands were crossed upon her breast; her feet were placed upon a crescent moon, and clouds of snow-white gauze and muslin seemed to float around her.

Never had such a display been witnessed in this

old church of the Jesuits (since the marriage of the Conde de Sierra Bella, whose palace yet stands in the great plaza), for old it was, when compared with other buildings in the city, having been founded in the early part of the seventeenth century.

From the floor the altar rose to the roof of the church, and as it did not reach from wall to wall, on each side were great reliquaries, closed by doors so richly gilded, that they shone like two vast plates of polished gold.

All on their knees before it knelt a congregation composed of 2,000 women (and a few hundred men), all richly attired, and many of them young, noble, and beautiful. It was a sight such as never before had been witnessed in Santiago.

Thanks to the favour of the Nuncio, Donna Ignez, with her cousin, Don Perez, and his sisters, Donna Erminia and the little Donna Paula, had procured places close to the glittering rail which surrounded the vast altar, and there they were speedily joined by Pedro, who left his brother among the valets in livery at the church porch, and who, utterly indifferent to, or oblivious of the long stare and steady frown bestowed upon him by Don Perez, presented his hand to Ignez, and—after he had devoutly crossed himself, and smote his breast sundry times—prepared to join in a whispered conversation, for the service had not yet commenced.

During the livelong day an idea that he was dead —that he had been suffocated in the closet—had haunted the mind of Ignez, who felt herself as if an accomplice in a great crime, and thus, when she found him kneeling beside her in church, she gave him her daintily-gloved little hand with a bright smile, that was full of real happiness; for though this man had so nearly destroyed her honour, she was most thankful to Heaven that he had not perished, as her fears predicted.

She felt no love for him now, but sincere gratitude to faithful cousin Perez, and returning love, too; but Pedro construed her smile in his own fashion, and believing that his fortunes were still in a fair way to prosper, he continued to whisper and kneel by her side, greatly to the rage of Perez, of whose agency in the episode of last night the bold impostor was yet completely ignorant.

Padre Ugarte was to preach, and Padre Eizagiuerro, the Apostolic Nuncio, the friend of Pope Pius IX., and founder of the American College at Rome, was next to address the people.

It had been said all over Santiago, some days before, that in the house of the Morenos, the Nuncio had expressed a regret that too probably the lighting up of the Campagnia Church would be inferior to the illuminations of the Romans.

"Rome!" exclaimed Ugarte; "in Colina we

have four-and-thirty mines of gold; in Lampa three of silver; the mountains of Caren are full of gold, and gold *laverados* cover all the summit of Calen. Our devotees are rich, Senor Nuncio, and on that holy night I shall show you *such an illumination as the world has never seen!*"

Fearfully prophetic was the boast of Ugarte!

While the people were still absorbed in prayer, and many a bright eye, and many a young and beautiful face turned in wonder and pleasure to the countless lamps that covered all the church, and ere the choir had struck up, or the procession of ecclesiastics entered, Pedro saw his brother Zuares forcing a passage, without much ceremony, through the kneeling thousands, towards him. What did this portend?

Pedro first felt emotions of annoyance, then of alarm, for the face of Zuares, who beckoned to him, was pale with agitation. Pedro approached him by a few paces.

"We are lost! They have discovered everything!" said Zuares, in a breathless whisper.

"They—who?"

"In the porch of the church I heard our names mentioned, and so concealed myself behind a statue to listen."

"Well, well! Quick, quick!"

"There, now in close consultation about the best

mode of seizing you as you leave the church, are Don Salvador de Moreno, Felipe Fernandez, the keeper of the Posada de Augustin, the mate of the brigantine, and that accursed Englishman, Hawkshaw. They have with them the alguazil-mayor, and four horse-police, with their carbines, and I heard them all whispering of sacrilege—robbery."

"What more?" hissed Pedro, through his clenched teeth.

"*Murder!*" whispered Zuares, with pallid lips.

The "trail of the serpent" was complete.

"The door is watched, you say?"

"And the church is surrounded by horse and foot alguazils," replied Zuares, in the same low, hurried whisper.

Pedro glanced hastily about him; there seemed to be no way of escape but by the porch, and that was guarded. Don Perez had seen Zuares approach, and his keen, stern eye was on the brothers. Already he was rising as if to leave the church; some plan for escape must be decided on, and quickly, as if the great fiend had whispered it, a diabolical thought occurred to Pedro Barradas.

He glanced towards the magnificent altar, on which, amid thousands of waxen and feather flowers, there burned several hundred lights. It was a transparent tabernacle, within which were innumerable jets of liquid gas, and it was composed en-

tirely of woodwork with gilded pasteboard and draperies of muslin.

Pedro resolved to create an alarm, and attempt an escape while it lasted.

Just at that moment, when the Nuncio and Ugarte, preceded by boys bearing censers and tapers, were entering, just as the choir struck up, and while a solemn murmur pervaded the vast church, for the crescent moon beneath the feet of the Madonna suddenly flashed forth a silvery splendour, unseen by all, save Don Perez, who was retiring, Pedro threw a lighted cigar match among the draperies of the altar, and in a moment the light festoons and muslin clouds, the whole figure of the Madonna, and the altar, which was seventy feet in height, became a roaring pyramid of fire.

A wild cry from the kneeling congregation burst over the whole church, and the door instantly became blocked by fugitives, who fell, wedged over each other in a hopeless pile, the upper stifling those below, while the spread of the conflagration exceeded in its speed the fear of those who would have fled.

An effect was produced beyond what Pedro had anticipated. He hoped for a mere alarm, he produced a catastrophe beyond all parallel in ancient or modern times.

Maddened, however, by double terror, he was

among the first who sought for safety. Trampling women and children under foot and endued with twice his natural strength and activity by sheer desperation, he contrived to reach the sill of a window, by climbing over a tomb, and dashing the lozenged frame to pieces, was preparing to throw himself headlong out, when his foot was seized from below.

He uttered an angry imprecation and looked down.

Donna Ignez and little Donna Paula both clung to him in the wildest terror.

"Save us, Don Pedro—save us, for the love of God!" cried they in despair, for the whole of that fated church was now covered with sheets of flame, its twenty thousand camphine lamps, as their cords and festoons gave way, adding to the terror by descending like a rain of fire, and setting aflame the hair and light summer dresses of those below—that struggling mass of horror-stricken people, who were all hopelessly wreathed and wedged together.

It was fire—fire—fire everywhere—above, below, around—a seething mass of flaming figures, wavering and scorching, a rising and descending sea of red flame, for the church of God had now become a living hell!

"Save me! save me!" gasped Ignez, choking in the heat, as her light summer dress caught fire.

"No use to save her now from fire, as I did from water. Perez, you don't require to swim here," cried the barbarian, as he thrust the shrieking girl and little Paula among the flames with his foot, and, springing into the street without, fled from Santiago.

The public papers have told us how, in less than a quarter of an hour, nearly all who were in that fatal church—that stupendous holocaust—to the number of nearly 3,000, perished; how a phalanx of death choked up the porch, and how, in many instances, tender hands and delicate arms were wrenched, yea, literally torn off, in attempts to drag forth the dying; how whole families were reduced to cinders, side by side, and all in the lapse of a few minutes.

They also told us "how the voice of lamentation was heard all over the land, and the bitter weeping of fathers, of husbands, and lovers for those who were the joy and brightness of their life, that refuses to be comforted because they are not. Hundreds of young girls, only yesterday radiant and beautiful, in the luxuriant bloom of the fresh and hopeful spring of life, to-day calcined, hideous corpses, horrible, loathsome to the sight, and impossible to be recognised! Within that quarter of an hour 2,000 souls had passed through the ordeal of fire to the judgment-seat of God!"

Old Don Salvador de Moreno made frenzied efforts to pierce through the pile of maddened and suffocating women, who hopelessly blocked up the door of the church, seeking to see, to save if he could, his daughter—his only child.

The screaming, the wringing of hands, the tearing of hair, and beating of faces, the invocations of the dying, and the roar of the advancing flames within and beyond, imparting to the church portal an appearance like to the entrance of a vast furnace, seared his heart and his eyeballs.

He saw not his daughter; but, amid this most unearthly blaze, he could distinguish Donna Erminia, and knew that Ignez could not be far off. He could see the tall, fair-skinned, proud, and beautiful Erminia, and little Paula, with her hair dishevelled, like many others near her, undergo a sudden and horrible transformation, as the lurid flame seized upon their skirts and tresses.

The sheet of scorching fire passed over them!

They became blackened, lean, shrunken, rigid, dead, sable statues, in contorted attitudes, and then crumbled away amid the furnace, for such had the church become.

Suddenly a figure rose for an instant amid the mass. It was Perez—Perez with Ignez in his arms, and as he rose her father saw them—his hair and

her dress all ablaze; then both sank back into that red sea of fire, to rise no more!

The old man became senseless, and was borne out of the press by the alguazil-mayor and Cramply Hawkshaw.

The Chilian papers tell us that a horseman threw his lasso into the church where a hundred hands tried to catch it. This man was Felipe Fernandez, of Valparaiso, who by main strength dragged one woman out in flames.

Again he cast his lasso in, but the fire scorched the leather thong away.

Within the time we have stated—a brief quarter of an hour—the roof, the dome, and cupola, descended in flames, with a thundering crash upon the church below, and all was over!

There perished all the family of Moreno, and their remains were never recognised. So poor Perez, whom Ignez had taunted for not saving her when in the water, died by her side in that sea of flame!

* * * * *

The silence of the grave succeeded to the cries of despair that for a time had pierced the calm night air, and, as the flames smouldered and died away on the sloped strata of blackened corpses that lay beneath the fallen dome, those who looked fearfully through the windows could see, by the clear splen-

dour of the tropical moon, those thousands of calcined dead, kneeling, standing, or lying all in their last contorted posture, as the wasting fire, or the agony of their awful end, had left them.

For the remainder of that night, no sounds were heard in Santiago but those of lamentation, and the solemn tolling of the church bells, as the archbishop summoned all to prayer for the souls that were gone.

Zuares was one of those men who effected an escape by the sacristy-door, before it was blocked up by fugitives, and meeting his brother on the road that led to the mountains, they heard the livelong night the tolling of the city bells in the distance.

Even they were overcome by dread and horror, as they continued their flight in silence and desperation, where they knew not and cared not, so that they left the city of Santiago as far behind them as possible.

For days after this they lurked unseen, unknown, and safely, in a great cane-brake, among the feathery bamboos—the *guádua*—some of which are ninety feet in height.

Ere long they reached the sea-coast, and shipped on board a short-handed brig that lay at the mouth of the Maypo river, laden with guano, and bound for Britain, and they gladly looked forward to face

again even the nights of bitter snow and close-reefed foresails off Cape Horn.

This vessel they left, when paid off in the London Docks, and, to the misfortune of all concerned, were shipped on board the *Hermione* by Captain Phillips, who could little foresee the mischief they had in store for him and his friends.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COMMITTED TO THE DEEP.

THE *Diaria de Valparaiso, El Mercurio del Vapor*, and other papers, but chiefly documents of a private nature belonging to the late Don Salvador de Moreno (for the poor man did not long survive that terrible 8th of December), have assisted, us in the compilation of the foregoing narrative of the two brothers, which forms a singular sequel to their father's secret history; but until the fact fell from the baked and faltering lips of Pedro Barradas, in no way were Morley Ashton, Bartelot, Heriot, and others who listened, prepared to hear that he was concerned in bringing about a catastrophe so terrible as that which closes our preceding chapter.

"So that was the great crime of Pedro—the awful deed which he has so frequently referred to in his ravings," said Morley.

"An awful deed truly," added Captain Phillips. "Who would live, even if he could, haunted by such memories? A precious logbook of crime his life presents?"

Death, however, came on Pedro fast. One of his last acts was to examine his wretched pallet for the watch and ring which, as detailed in a previous chapter, he had forcibly taken from Hawkshaw.

His half-fatuous intention was now, probably, to bestow them on some one; but a groan of pity and disgust escaped him on finding that one of his worthless compatriots had already abstracted them, and now, perhaps, would gladly give them both for one drop of water to cool his parched tongue in the drifting quarter-boat.

"The past, the past!" he moaned; "*misericordia! misericordia!* My life—my lost life! Oh! that with my present bitter experience I could live it over once again—even a year of it—how different it should be! How many have been misspent, frittered away and blackened? Oh! for a month—a week—to repent. One day—mother of God—only one day; but it may not be—cannot be! Oh that I might warn Zuares, ere it be too late also for him—no absolution, no hope."

As the life of Pedro ebbed—easily, however, complete mortification having set in—and his senses passed away, he muttered something again and again; and Morley, who was in the forecastle, held the lamp near—for night had come on—and stooped over him to listen.

He was delirious as well as dying, and his husky

and broken ravings were of the cathedral church of Orizaba, and he averred that he saw at the foot of his bed, in that wretched forecastle bunk, the figure of a woman.

"A figure—what is it like?" asked Morley, glancing round in spite of himself.

"A woman enshrined in light. She is clad in blue, with thirteen stars around her head. *Ave Maria purissima! Ave Maria purissima!*" he cried, and, sinking back, closed his eyes, overcome by weakness and excitement.

It was the image so revered in his innocent childhood, when he and Zuares prayed at their mother's knee; and with this shadow before his visionary eye—the same figure that in dreams had hung over his cradle in infancy—the feet of which he and Zuares had been taught to kiss—the same image, with an aureole of light around its placid face, the Madonna of Orizaba, with her feet resting on the sharp, pale crescent moon, before his glazing eyes, whose last expression was fear and ecstasy—the soul of this inscrutable ruffian passed away!

Then Morley Ashton, who was the last lonely watcher, hastened on deck to report that all was over.

This perpetrator of so many crimes was dead! Ferocity, avarice, cruelty, insatiate lust, unavailing remorse, and all the stormy passions which had, in

turn, convulsed that lawless heart, that dark and sombre visage, were gone now. The man was dead and gone—gone as if he had never been!

Before the ship's bell had clanged the last half hour of the morning watch, Noah and Morrison had rolled his body up in the blankets in which he died, and had lashed a couple of shot in a canvas-bag to his ankles.

Then they laid him on a grating to leeward, anxious to have the last rites over before the young ladies came on deck.

The red enamelled cross of San Jago, which Morley had brought from the hermit's cell, was tied up with him; indeed, it was found impossible to take it from his hand, in which it was tightly clenched.

There was mental relief to all on board when the burial of Pedro—the last act of a long and gloomy drama—was over, and when his tall and muscular form—herculean and ghastly it looked, rolled up in blankets, and lashed round with spunyarn—went surging, feet foremost, through the white foam, vanishing for ever, in the deep green sea to leeward, while the ship, as if lightened of a load, flew through the shining waves of the Mozambique.

This was on a Saturday, about 8 A.M., when the golden sun shone in all its beauty on the fresh, cool morning sea.

Ethel could never think of Pedro without a cold shudder, and often said, "Thus is sin its own punishment;" but Rose, her terror past, had imbibed almost a sentimental pity or sympathy for the dead ruffian, who figured so largely in the diary before mentioned), which was now resumed for the benefit of her old gossip and companion, Lucy Page, at Acton-Rennel.

Captain Phillips, however, took a very different view of the matter, and so much had his naturally kind character been soured or warped by recent events, that he could scarcely be prevailed upon to read the burial service over the defunct mutineer; and thus he cut it pretty short, upon the plea that a rough day was before them, that he had few hands, and wished to take in a reef in each of the courses; so never were those words—so solemn and so awful—under the usual circumstances "we thus commit his body to the deep," so irreverently uttered, and yet, worthy old Jack Phillips is the kindest of all good fellows.

The Saturday night came on, calm, clear, and starry, the south-west monsoon blew fresh and steadily, and as close-hauled as a square-rigged craft could be, the *Hermione* was making a long tack towards the southern point of Madagascar. Fortunately, nothing had been seen yet of the three red proas, of which such earnest warning had been

given by the officer of Her Majesty's corvette the *Clyde*.

The cheerful glass went round to "sweethearts and wives," and to "all ships at sea." To these weekly toasts, Captain Phillips added a special glass of stiff grog, in honour of his airy friend, "the clerk of the weather," whom Rose, who was writing, supposed to be the late Admiral Fitzroy. Ethel was occupying herself with crochet, Mr. Basset was asleep, and Morley was at the wheel on deck, and already it seemed that Pedro Barradas and the particulars of his terrible history were forgotten. So—

> "The wind blows out, the bubble dies,
> The spring entombed in autumn lies,
> The dew dries up, the star is shot,
> The flight is past, and man forgot."

CHAPTER XIX.

DR. HERIOT'S FEE.

During the six preceding chapters, the reader may have been kindly wondering how Mr. Basset's health progressed after the night which succeeded the skilful attempt of Dr. Heriot to rescue him from a death that seemed all but accomplished.

That night he had passed in heavy groans, in nervous startings, and uneasy slumber; but next morning he was able to articulate, and complained to Ethel, in accents faint and weak as those of an ailing child, of pains that spread over all his body; these, however, were only consequent to the severe friction he had undergone, to restore the circulation of the blood.

From Heriot's hands he received some warm milk, mixed with brandy—milk from the stores of soldered tin—and this luxury he swallowed with ease; but yet seemed as one in a dream, and in broken accents, he muttered of pain, and in a dreary and bewildered way, of his "poor dear girls, whom he should never see again."

Then he fell into a sound sleep, with Ethel's soft white arm under his head, and she listened to his heavy respirations, more with fear than any other emotion, lest each long-drawn breath might prove the last.

But Heriot, who patted her kindly and caressingly on the head, sought to smile those fears away, by telling her that "all danger was past now," and so the second day of restoration gradually stole away.

Another night of complete repose "sent Mr. Basset a long way on the voyage of recovery," as Captain Phillips said, when peeping into the little cabin, where the pale, affectionate, and unwearied watcher, though her eyes were bloodshot, and had dark rings under them, yet hung over her charge, and now Rose came to take her place.

"How is dear papa this morning?" she asked, anxiously.

"All well, Rose, darling, if the old boy will only keep up his pluck," was the doctor's unpoetical reply, as he slyly kissed the pretty inquirer, and led away Ethel, who he insisted should take a little repose, with the announcement that she "was quite killing herself; and he would not stand it, as he was accountable to the captain for the health of all on board—and then Morley must not see how ill she was looking."

As for poor Morley, she could see but little of

him just then, for he, with Bartelot, Morrison, Gawthrop, and Foster, were never off the deck, where by his skill and activity he won golden opinions from the captain, whose anxieties (when the distance he had yet to run, the size of his crippled ship when compared with the slender crew, the prospect of water running short, and having to keep a look-out for those three proas, are all considered) were certainly not small.

To Rose Basset, our medical friend Leslie Heriot, a good, kind-hearted, sensible, and practical Scotsman, had been at first but a source of lively little flirtation and fun — a dangler, an admirer, and nothing more. At home she always had a dozen such; it was Rose's habit and way; but now, as his earnestness, and the troubles and dangers they shared together, created a deeper emotion in her breast, he gradually became the dream, the *beau-idéal* of a warm-hearted young girl's passionate and often senseless first love; and to the conclusion of her portion of the voyage—when she, Ethel, and papa would land at Port Louis, and when Leslie must sail on to Singapore, a vast distance, of which she had very little conception, save that it was far, far away up the Indian seas—to that period, we say, she looked forward with dismay and alarm.

Long and perilous though the voyage had been,

it was not yet long enough for Rose, who was desperately in love with the young Scotch doctor.

And now that Leslie, by his skill, care, and tenderness, had saved her father from death, had restored him to life and to his daughters, he became an idol, whom she felt that she and Ethel should worship with all their hearts; and Ethel's quiet, earnest, and great gratitude to her sister's lover was only equalled by the sincere regard and esteem she had for him.

On the other hand, the filial love, the tender solicitude, and unwearying attention of these two girls to their suffering father charméd all, but none more than old Captain Phillips, whose experience of the sex was chiefly gained amid the hurly-burly of seaports.

"Aha!" said he, slapping Morley on the back, and winking knowingly to Heriot, "that is the sort of thing I like to see; that is the kind of discipline that prepares the daughter for the wife, and the wife for being a mother. God bless them all!" he added, uncorking a square case-bottle, to pour forth a libation in honour of his opinions.

"You are right, captain," said the doctor, who, in his shirt-sleeves, was busy preparing breakfast, as Noah came from the galley with a steaming kettle, for they had now to do all things in turn.

"Better to share a crust in a wigwam with a dear

good girl like Miss Ethel Basset, than have an heiress with only her dirty acres to recommend her —your health, doctor—them's Jack Phillips's sentiments."

Morley gave an unconscious sigh, for the poor fellow felt bitterly that he had not even "the crust" referred to by the captain.

"Miss Basset has the patience of a vestal in these long and pious vigils of the night," said Heriot, with enthusiasm. "She and Rose have, indeed, hearts formed for tenderness, and for doing all the kind duties of life."

"Yes, doctor, very true; and I begin to think, if I could change my bachelor ways a bit, and warp close into the matrimonial haven, there is a plump little widow at Gravesend that wouldn't mind changing her name to Mrs. Jack Phillips."

As the captain said this, there was a gratified twinkle in his merry blue eye, and quite a little blush on his brown cheek; then he added, hastily:

"Now, doctor, that ham seems done to a turn. Pour out the coffee, Ashton; I must be off on deck for the breeze holds steady, and this is our last tack south-west'ard towards the coast of Africa."

"Our last?" repeated Morley, mechanically.

"Positively for the last time, as the play-bills have it, thank Heaven, and the wind it sends us!"

"Thank Heaven, say I too. I only wish, further, that we were round Cape St. Mary."

"That will come too, all in good time, please God."

Some time elapsed before Mr. Basset knew all he had undergone, and before he became fully aware of the vast service rendered to him by Dr. Heriot. For a time the poor man was awed, and humbled, and overwhelmed by all he had been subjected to.

On the morning he heard all this for the first time, Captain Phillips shook him by the hand, and said, laughing:

"Bailie Nicol Jarvie says, 'My conscience, hang a bailie!' but here we have actually had a judge hanged at the yardarm, aboard this 'ere ship, and yet never a hair the worse, thanks to Dr. Heriot here."

"Please, captain, don't speak of it," whispered Ethel.

"God bless you, my dear sir," said Mr. Basset, grasping both Heriot's hands in his. "He only can reward you for your kindness and exercise of your skill; but I am *the worse*, Captain Phillips, and never again shall be half the man I was."

"Take courage, sir," said Morley; "we never know what is before us."

"But I feel in every limb and fibre, Morley, that

I never shall fully recover the shock my nervous system has sustained."

"You shall, sir—you shall in time," said Heriot. "Only take courage, as Ashton says."

"Oh, how miraculous it seems," murmured the poor gentleman, as his wasted hand played with the rich brown tresses of Rose, who half knelt and half reclined beside his bed, with her eyes beaming smiles alternately on him and on her lover, Heriot; "how miraculous, indeed. Restored to life—restored to life, and to my girls—restored, after enduring, apparently, all the mental and bodily pangs of a shocking and terrible death!"

"Yes, dearest papa; it is, indeed, a debt of gratitude we owe to Dr. Heriot," said Ethel.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Basset, don't go on this way," said Heriot. "You make a poor fellow quite ashamed of doing his mere duty."

"By what can I ever recompense you, Doctor Heriot?" said Mr. Basset; "what reward can I ever give you?"

"I think I know, sir," said the captain, winking with great mystery; while Rose, who felt a scene impending, grew pale, and trembled.

"You do?" asked Mr. Basset.

"Yes; and so does Miss Ethel—and so do we all."

"Look, papa—I think Dr. Heriot will consider

this the most valued fee you can give him," said Ethel, as she playfully put Rose's right hand in that of the doctor, who reddened to the roots of his hair, and, for a brave and sensible fellow, really looked very foolish.

Mr. Basset stared at them all round in perplexity; then, as a sudden light seemed to break in upon him, he smiled, and said:

"Is it so, Ethel?"

"Yes, dear papa."

"And Rose, my little pet, what do you say?"

Rose smiled, and sobbed, and grew pale and red, and wished herself on deck.

"So be it, then. I can't part with her, Heriot; but God bless you both, and keep you ever by me," said Mr. Basset, as he closed his eyes wearily, and lay back to sleep.

Poor Heriot's happiness made him giddy, and he grew as pale as if sentence of death had been passed on him. He could scarcely believe it all; but he kissed Ethel, who had concocted this little tableau; and Rose clasped the fat jolly captain round his short neck, calling him her "dear old thing." He returned her embrace with extreme cordiality, and no doubt wished he was as close to the plump widow of Gravesend.

"How happy I am," said Ethel, blushing with pleasure; "our troubles seem nearly over now."

"And I, too, am happy—oh, so happy!" said Rose; "I would not exchange positions, Leslie, to be Queen of England—or Scotland, if you like it better, Heriot, dear."

"And never was M.D. of my old *Alma Mater* rewarded by a fee so droll and handsome," said Heriot, smiling fondly on the lively and laughing girl, who clung to his arm as they went on deck together.

Thus, as Mrs. Lirriper says, "All true life is gain, and the sorrows that befall us are none other than solemn massive foundation-stones, laid below the unfathomable gloom, that a measureless content may be built upon them."

But there were on board another pair of lovers in whom we should be equally interested, and whose prospects were not so bright, perhaps, for Heriot had an income, however small, and plenty of "expectations."

When the excitement, consequent to Mr. Basset's illness, if we may term it so, and to Pedro's story, death, and burial were all passed, Morley Ashton and Ethel resumed their usual habit of thought; and again in their communings they began to speculate on their future, and to hope that, on reaching the Isle of France, Mr. Basset, by his legal influence, would be able to procure for him some suitable employment, by means of which he could

make an adequate livelihood—the hope that dawned of old at Laurel Lodge — and their engagement might be fulfilled.

But Mr. Basset, to whom Morley had spoken of these things, somewhat dashed their cherished hopes, by frequently shaking his head, and declaring that his health had suffered so much, that he felt himself quite inadequate to assume his place on the bench, and that hence all local and legal influence would be gone.

There were times, too, when he became quite gloomy, and feared, he said, that he "might only land to die—land to be laid in a foreign soil, far from that God's acre, where his dear wife lay at Acton-Rennel; and then, what would become of his poor girls without a protector in the world?"

These gloomy forebodings filled Ethel with sickening apprehension. This was a probable catastrophe, the anticipation of which also made Morley miserable, and he begged Mr. Basset not to speak thus before his eldest daughter; but he rather liked the luxury of dilating on the chances of his own demise.

However, they little knew what fate or fortune had in store for them at the Isle of France, or whether they should ever see that isle at all; and despite his melancholy forebodings, which were

merely the result of his shaken nervous system, Mr. Basset recovered rapidly, and on that day, when the *Hermione* was near the close of her last long tack towards the coast of Africa, he was conveyed on deck, to have a look at Cape Corientes, which is the most eastern portion of the land of Inhambane, and is almost immediately under the Tropic of Capricorn.

Faint and blue the headland rose at the horizon, from a golden-coloured sea, about thirty miles distant, and, through a double-barrelled glass, its outline could be clearly distinguished against the rarefied sky beyond.

"And that is Africa!" said Ethel, regarding the blue streak with her heart full of great thoughts, and her dark eyes full of intelligence and interest as she remembered all she had heard and read of Park and Livingstone, Speke and Grant.

"Yes, Miss Basset," said Morrison, "and a great river, called the Inhambane, flows into the Mozambique Channel but a few miles north of that promontory."

"How I should like to land—to tread the soil there, where it but for only a minute, Morley."

"Why so, Ethel?" asked Morley, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"I don't know, but I should like to do so, and yet I know not why."

"I think I could tell you, miss," said Morrison.

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes; that you might say with the Roman of old, 'Ego in Africa,'" replied the Scotch mate, glancing from Ethel to the doctor, who smiled at his countryman's apt allusion.

"Is that your idea, Ethel?" asked Heriot.

"Yes."

But now there was a sudden bustle, when the male inhabitants of this floating speck upon the sea hastened to their various quarters, as she was to be put about, on her last tack in the Mozambique—a long run of many, many miles ere she would sight the isle of Madagascar.

"Ready about, my friends!" cried the captain, as he took his station on the weather side of the quarter-deck; "helm's a lee—tacks and sheets—let go and haul!" followed each other rapidly.

Noah had the wheel, and down went the helm at a signal from Phillips, the fore tack and main sheet were let go, round swung the yards in their iron slings, aft came the main sheet, and then the spanker, eased gradually off, fell away to leeward.

Round came the ship bravely, and with the monsoon filling all her sails, she stood off in the opposite direction to that she had hitherto been pursuing, her starboard tacks on board, and lying almost at a right angle from her long white frothy wake, which

could be distinctly traced in the pure green of the sea, and soon after the faint blue outline of Cape Corientes sank into the evening haze upon the lee quarter.

CHAPTER XX.

RADAMA PUFFADDER.

It was a pleasant sunny morning when Ethel was roused by Morley tapping on her cabin-door, and making the cheerful announcement that land was in sight, almost ahead, so she and Rose made a rapid toilette and joined him and the rest of their friends on deck.

The south-west wind held steadily, and its breath rippled all the morning sea in wavelets that seemed tipped with gold. The sunshine, bright and warm, spread a yellow tint over all the western quarter of the sky. In dark outline, as if tinted with indigo, about ten miles distant, rose a mountain, in the form of a sugar-loaf, blending at its base with lesser ones that were near to the sea.

"Madagascar, Ethel," said Morley, with a bright smile, as he pointed to the coast.

"And yonder headland is Cape St. Mary," added Dr. Heriot. "I should know the place pretty well by this time."

"Why, Leslie?" asked Rose.

"Because I see it now for the fourth time."

"Poor Leslie!" said Rose; "and you have gone those long voyages so often, when I knew nothing of them."

"Or—of me, Rose."

"That does seem so strange *now!*"

"However, Rose, I have no intention of voyaging much more, 'for there's a good time coming,' as the song says."

Morrison had the wheel, and the captain desired him to "hug the land, and keep close in shore, as he wanted to procure fresh water."

"I find that the needle varies at times in these waters, sir," said Morrison.

"Aye—but our patent steering compass always holds true."

Though the long and remarkable coast they were approaching is flat and low near the shore, the sea around it is without hidden danger in the form of shoals, rocks, or reefs, and water fifty fathoms deep can be found within four miles of it.

As the ship drew nearer, objects became more distinct—strange trees, gigantic plants, and fantastic wigwams, like bee-hives; and after breakfast, Ethel and Rose, with their opera-glasses, could see these features plainly, and particularly a headland, covered with tufted palm-trees.

"And that is Cape St. Mary?"

"Yes," replied Morley, who, to support her, had one arm round Ethel and another round the mizzen-shrouds, for the deck was slippery with the morning dew and the spray that flew over it now and then, for the ship careened well over beneath the breeze, which was now almost abeam.

"Then we are out of the Mozambique Channel?"

"Yes; or nearly so. By noon we shall be quite out of it."

"Thank Heaven! I wish we were only a little nearer Port Louis."

"We shall soon be so, Ethel, after leaving this shore."

"Don't deem me foolish, dearest; but, after all we have suffered, I always tremble when I think of—of——"

"What, Ethel?"

"Of those three piratical proas which the captain speaks about. I dreamt of them last night, and saw them quite full of wild black fellows, with spears, plumes, and war-paint—just like the pictures we have seen of the savages who killed Captain Cook."

"The coast hereabout looks wild and solitary indeed."

"A few miles eastward lies Fort Dauphin," said the doctor; "it was an old French settlement, but was deserted and ruined long ago."

Anxious, we have said, to procure water, the captain stood close in towards one of the little isles that lie about the south-western extremity of Madagascar; and now every man on board, except the convalescent Mr. Basset, had to work hard in taking in and stowing some of the fore-and-aft canvas, getting the kedge anchors and warps ready, having the boats clear, and the soundings had to be attended to without intermission.

A curiously-built native boat was now seen approaching swiftly from the shore, having suddenly shot out of a creek. It was very long, very low, and was paddled by two men.

"Hollo, ladies!" cried Noah Gawthrop, who was busy in the remaining quarter-boat, getting the fall-tackles clear; "look at this swell coming alongside in a cocked hat, like a wice-admiral o' the fleet! But I beg parding, marm," he added, suddenly, as Ethel adjusted the screw of her lorgnette, "you mustn't look at him, for he ain't nothin' on but the cocked hat and a necklace."

"Sheep 'hoy!" cried a shrill voice, as the boat rose and fell on the waves.

"What do you want, darkey?" asked Noah.

"You savey me?" cried the Malay.

"No, I am blow'd if I do," was the surly reply.

"What for you no savey me?" remonstrated the other; "yam, yam—sell, sell—nice, nice, nice."

Then he held up an inverted bottle, to show that it was empty.

"By Jove! 'tis old Captain Puffadder!" exclaimed Captain Phillips, as the native boat came sheering alongside, and a white-headed Malay, who literally had no other attire than a necklace of crystal beads and an old battered naval cocked hat, which some man-o'-war wag had given him, relinquishing his carved teak-wood paddle, caught with great dexterity a line which was cast to him, and made it fast to a round knob at the prow of his boat, which, as the line became taut, fell at once into the ship's wake astern.

"It is old Radama Puffadder, whom we saw on our two last voyages. He sells vegetables and fruit to any ship that comes close enough in shore," said Heriot, looking round for the young ladies; but when the boat had come nearer, the utter want of attire displayed by the two Malays had fairly driven the Misses Basset and Nance Folgate down the stair of the companion, where the merry but half-stifled laugh of Rose could be heard from time to time.

"A sly old file!" said Mr. Foster, looking over the taffrail.

"How are you, Puff, my boy?" asked the doctor; "what have you got for us?"

The old Malay, who was hideously ugly, and

whose bare, attenuated form was brown as old mahogany, lifted his cocked hat, and replied in what seemed an unintelligible torrent of consonants, and then held up a turtle by one of its hind feet, after which he grinned and yelled.

He and his companion next hauled in the tow-line, hand over hand, till the boat was close to the lee mizzen-chains—the chances of being swamped seemed nothing to Captain Puffadder—and to Morley, who stood on the channel-plate, he handed on board whatever he had to offer, and in a short time there was on deck a goodly pile of the yellow-bellied gourds for boiling and eating, with butter and milk; bananas, to roast like apples; peas, beans, and water-melons; brown-skinned onions, and golden-coloured oranges and lemons; together with a great sprawling turtle, the sight of which would have made an alderman's eyes twinkle; and there, too, were six brace of wood-pigeons.

For all this seasonable stock, the captain paid him by six bottles of strong alcohol, three boxes of lucifer-matches, and a dollar or two, and these coins, when cut into four, form the circulating medium in the "Great Britain of Africa."

The captain and the doctor, who seemed to understand and amuse themselves with the jargon of "Captain" Puffadder, inquired where fresh water was to be had, and he led them to under-

stand that, under the brow of the cliff to which he pointed, there was a creek in one of the islets; that there several springs flowed, and safe anchorage would be found.

"This will suit admirably," said Phillips, to Bartelot. "We shall lie there a couple of days, for some of our rigging requires overhauling sorely."

"Won't you come on board, Puff, and pilot us, while we run in?" asked Mr. Foster.

"I no savey *that*—no can do," replied the Malay, as he let his boat drop astern, and, taking a long pull at one of the rum-bottles, he grinned with satisfaction and handed it to his longing companion.

"Won't you remain with us till we have filled our water-tank?" cried the captain over the taffrail.

Again the dingy Malay grinned and shook his white head, which looked as if it had been snowed over, and, pointing shoreward, to indicate that he must return, cast off the tow-line, after which his boat, that bobbed up and down like a cork, was rapidly dropped astern.

The wind was now becoming light, and, with Morley and Heriot stripped to their shirt-sleeves, pulling ahead in the quarter-boat, and Mr. Foster in her bow, sounding carefully every minute with hand-lead, the ship was steered by the captain in

person towards the creek, the entrance of which was seen to open plainly enough under the brow of the cliff, at the base of which some breakers were boiling white upon a ridge of rock, "like the devil's own milk," as Noah said, adding:

"I wonder why the deuce that old fellow wouldn't come aboard? I hope it isn't a snare, this kind inwitation to anchor in a creek."

"A snare, Noah?" repeated Bartelot.

"'Cause, sir, he has the look of an old wrecker, to my mind."

A dead calm soon fell upon the land and sea, and from the square yards of the *Hermione*, her fore and maincourse, and a jury main-topsail, hung down straight and motionless, till they were hauled up prior to furling, as she glided slowly, and with almost imperceptible motion, through the narrow gut of the creek.

"Leather strip—ten fathoms; red rag—seven fathoms; seven again; white rag—five fathoms," Foster kept repeating from time to time, as he hove the hand-line from the bow of the leading boat. Bartelot and Morrison were also in it, and pulling with all their strength, for they had the kedge anchors and a couple of strong Manilla warps with them.

Beyond its narrow entrance, which was almost shrouded in mangroves, that brushed the ship's

channels, the creek opened out into a tiny bay, or oval-shaped basin, and there, before sunset had beamed its red farewell upon the summit of the rocks, the *Hermione*, with her courses hauled, her jury topsail-yards lowered upon the cap, her spanker brailed up, and her jib and stay-sails stowed away, was moored quietly, as if in the middle of a dock, by two warps, one at the stem and the other at the stern, both being carried ashore to her kedge anchors, which were embedded in the banks, among the mangroves and other luxuriant vegetation that grew down to the water's edge.

"From here to Port Louis we have a run of about seven hundred odd miles," said Captain Phillips; "the season is fine; but we shall fall to our work by daybreak to-morrow—fill the tank—overhaul the fore rigging, have it tarred down and rattled anew in some parts, and then be off with the first breeze of wind, as I don't fancy the Madagascar fever."

"And this creek, with its mangroves dipping in the slimy ooze, seems just the place to catch it," said Tom Bartelot.

"I suppose it was in some such cliff as that, Ethel," said Morley, looking up at the tall rocky brow which overhung the creek, "that old Marco Polo, who, it seems, wrote about Madagascar in the

thirteenth century, says the birds called the roc built their nests."

"Were they like Sindbad's roc?" asked Rose.

"Larger, says old Marco, in form resembling an eagle, and so huge that they would soar into the air with the largest elephant in their talons, and let it fall dead on the earth prior to devouring it; and that their wings, which, when outspread, obscured the sunshine like a flying cloud, measured forty-eight feet apart, each pen-feather being twenty-four feet in length."

"There is nothing like telling a good story when one is about it; but I hope the breed is extinct," said Rose.

"Yes; like the giant wader of Australia, if it ever existed at all."

As the evening closed in, with no thought of local danger or treachery, but enjoying the brief cessation from the constant toil to which they were subjected by the smallness of their number, and thinking only of the termination of their voyage and a happy future, our friends were all grouped under the quarter-deck awning, and Noah was enjoying a quiet pipe at the windlass-bitt, with a can of grog beside him.

Aft, the top of the cabin skylight had been covered with a white cloth and improvised as a table, on which were spread some of the luscious

fruits and sliced water-melon bought from the Malay, Puffadder, and a bottle or two of the captain's best wine.

Then, that music might not be wanting, Ethel and Rose, uniting their clear, sweet, happy voices, while Heriot accompanied them on his flute, which he played to perfection, sang one of their favourite duets, waking the echoes of the rocks, and rousing out of the mangroves the stork, the pelican, and the samba, with its plumage red as fire: while the red sunlight died away, and the tropical constellations came out, and while the solemn shadows deepened in that lonely creek, the soft English voices of the two sisters so well attuned together, filled Noah's stern eyes with moisture, and his rough old head with sweet, sad holy thoughts of other times, as he listened, and sat alone, the last occupant of the once crowded and noisy forecastle-bunks.

That lonely creek was fated to present a very different scene about the same hour on the morrow!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MANGROVE CREEK.

The secluded creek in which the ship lay moored had a little history of its own, that was better than the misty recollections of old Marco Polo, who, by-the-way, never visited Madagascar at all. It was in this solitary little basin, or natural dock, that the high-pooped and low-waisted caravella of the first discoverer of Madagascar, Lorenzo Almieda (son of Don Francisco Almieda, viceroy of India for Don Emmanuel of Portugal, in 1506), came to anchor, after a voyage that was long and perilous; and now, as our friends Morley and Heriot gazed on its strange and fantastic cliffs, the former thought of the Serendib of the "Arabian Nights," and the latter, who was better read, recalled the Island of the Moon, and the Cerne of Pliny, with the works of other writers, who averred that Madagascar was an isle divided between two races—one of giants, and another of dwarfs—the Kimos—about three feet high. These were always at war, until the former were victorious, at a place called Itapere,

two leagues south-west of Fort Dauphin, where a pyramid of stones attests the alleged slaughter and destruction of the poor dwarfs.

The creek was also known to be the haunt of the famous freebooter, Captain Avery, an Englishman who gained vast plunder by his piracies against the emperors of Mogul and China, and who, about the latter year of Queen Anne's reign, lived in and about Madagascar, with the strange title of King of the Seas.

Not the least remarkable features of this creek were its enormous blocks of rock crystal, that sparkled in the sunshine with a thousand prisms of wonderful light and beauty. Trees surrounded it; the tall and straight voua-azigne; the bushy fouraka, distilling its green-coloured balsam; the wild fig, whose fruit yields a milky juice; the palm-tree, who leaves are like feathers, and form roofing for wigwams; the ancient papyrus, the cotton and the nutmeg trees, all grew on the rocks; while betel, pepper, and tobacco were the weeds that grew among the jungle, where the puffadder — a reptile about a yard long — and other serpents lurked.

Just as the sun was rising in his tropical splendour from the sea, and through the opening to the eastward sent a glorious flush of light into the leafy recesses of the creek, Noah caught a couple of

gallant turtles, each weighing nearly three hundred pounds.

After bringing them on board, he lowered them into the water by a line, tied, as sailors alone can tie, round them, and left them to paddle about, to swim, duck, or dive as they pleased, till required for the larder.

As for the one brought by Captain Puffadder, he flatly refused to kill it till sunset, on the plea that "a turtle never dies till the sun goes down, that he warn't goin' to be so jolly cruel as to leave it a nole day in a nagony."

From the deck Ethel and Rose, with their opera-glasses, were never weary of watching all the strange trees, plants, birds, and insects that surrounded them; everything seemed novel, save the turtles, which, of course, were like those they had seen squattering in fish-tubs at home.

Prior to their appearance on deck, with the first peep of dawn, a long hose, water-casks, and so forth, had been put in operation, and thus, before noon, a sufficient supply of pure water had been pumped into the tank from a spring which flowed over a mass of crystal rock, and through the decayed trunk of a fallen tree, which formed a species of natural duct.

Morrison, Foster, and Noah Gawthrop then fell to work upon the starboard side of the fore-rigging;

Phillips and Tom Bartelot on the other, and all proceeded to tar down, and in many places to rattle anew the shrouds, and various other repairs went on with rapidity; while the doctor and Morley, with a gun, went ashore, and ascended the rocks towards the summit of the cliff, which overhangs the entrance of the creek.

The ascent proved long and toilsome, for everywhere the matted jungle grew thick; the weedy luxuriance there is wonderful, and so woven that it seems the result, not of a season's rank vegetation, but of ages; and as many little reptiles are always lurking amid it, no small care is requisite for avoiding them.

At last the two explorers reached the plateau, or summit of the cliff, and merrily gave a united shout, which made their friends at work on the fore-rigging pause and look up, and Ethel and Rose, who were seated on the quarter-deck, wave their handkerchiefs in response.

From the elevation of more than 300 feet, the creek, when viewed, seemed like a pool, the ship a toy.

Beyond the islet Morley and Heriot saw the whole sweep of the southern end of the great island of Madagascar, from Cape St. Mary towards Ainse des Galiona, with the pale blue and distant summit of Botistmeni, the highest mountain to the south-

ward of that lofty chain which divides the island into two parts.

In many places the coast was flat and low, and by their glasses they could see that the shore looked green and slimy, and here and there were dome-shaped huts of mud and palm-leaves, sheltered by clumps of ebony and raven trees.

North-westward, the ocean they hoped to traverse on the morrow was flashing in its noonday brilliance; but it seemed lonely and void; not a sail was visible on all its vast expanse. Towards the south-west the higher portions of the islet hid the watery path they had pursued from the great channel of the Mozambique.

"We may ascend higher in *that* direction," said Morley, pointing, "and see if a sail is in sight there."

"Stop!" exclaimed Heriot, in an excited tone, as he applied to his eyes his powerful double-barrelled ship-glass, and gazed intently towards the mainland.

"What do you see that interests you?"

"Look, Ashton, look! What is that creeping out from behind that wooded headland?"

"Where?"

"There—about five miles off."

"A boat—a long craft of some kind, without masts."

"Another follows now."

"And another—all painted red!"

"Three!" said Heriot, in a low voice.

"The proas—the three red proas!"

"Down, Ashton, stoop down, lest they see our figures at this distance against the clear sky!" exclaimed the doctor, suiting the action to the word.

Lying at full length among the thick grass that covered all the summit of the cliff, the two friends, resting on their elbows, took a long sight of the strange boats.

"Each is full of men. I could count their heads."

"They are pulling fast, and steering direct for this island!" exclaimed Heriot.

"We have been lured in here and deceived, I doubt not, by that old Malay villain, Puffadder. Old sailors have strange instincts at times, and Noah seemed to suspect as much."

"This is why he would neither come on board nor pilot us into the creek. But we may do him an injustice; he may not be in league with these pirates at all."

"Oh, Ethel!" exclaimed Morley, speaking as if to himself, "your forebodings, your dreams are perhaps about to be terribly realised."

"Let us away to the ship, we have not a moment to lose! See how the paddles flash in the sunshine. They are all pulling as if the devil was after them!"

Their mode of rowing was peculiar, for the paddlers all faced the bow of each proa, and scooped the water astern.

Breathless with excitement, heat, and alarm, and with their imaginations picturing visions of cruelty and slaughter, Ashton and Heriot came plunging down the jungle-covered steep with such speed and impetuosity, that their friends in the ship paused again and again to observe them in wonder, though believing that they had some very unusual reason for this sudden display of activity.

Both were young, light, and active; thus, in less than a quarter of an hour, they had reached the ship by means of the gig, which they had left moored among the mangroves, sprang on deck, and reported what they had observed towards the mainland of Madagascar.

Could they have seen a little way to the south-west they might have observed something more; but the sight of the three proas proved quite enough for them.

Their tidings produced instant consternation.

"That wily old villain, Puffadder, has recommended us to warp in here, and then betrayed our whereabouts. By Heavens—we are in a precious mess!" exclaimed the captain.

"And Ethel and Rose," said Morley, turning to

Heriot, with a voice and face expressive of grief and terror; "what is to be done now?"

"Done! Why, sir, we must make the best of it," said Noah, energetically, as his old man-o'-war instincts came upon him, and he began to strip to his waist; "if these etarnal warmints get hold o' the ship, they'll pick every copper nail out of her!"

"Captain Phillips," said Morrison, a sharp-witted and resolute Scotchman, and who spoke with more rapidity than his countrymen usually do; "the ship is moored athwart the creek, with her port side to the mouth of it. Bring over her two starboard carronades, and work the four in battery together. Thus we may knock these proas all to pieces by round shot as they head for the creek in succession."

"You speak like a nangel or a nadmiral, Mr. Morrison!" said Noah.

"Excellent!" cried Phillips; "to work and with a will, my friends." He threw aside his coat, and bouncing about with an agility remarkable for one of his years and fat little figure, added, "Bring on deck all the arms and ammunition we have, doctor; get the powder out of the magazine aft, Mr. Ashton; and take your daughters below, Mr. Basset, please, for the sight of their pale and woe-begone faces flurries me. Look alive, my hearties. Captain Bartelot and Mr. Morrison help me here; bear a hand to cast loose these two starboard guns."

The two carronades were soon clear, their tompions taken out, their touch-holes cleaned, and they were run over to the port or larboard side. Originally the *Hermione* had been pierced for twelve guns, but, as we have stated, she had only four six-pound carronades, and only four shot remaining for each. They were loaded, shotted, and primed with great rapidity by Noah, who used a capstan-bar as a rammer. Then, diving below, he suddenly reappeared from the steerage with a hamper full of empty bottles.

"What are these for?" asked Captain Phillips.

"Grape and canister, sir," replied old Noah, as he proceeded to smash the bottles and fill the carronades with the fragments even to their very muzzles.

Morley was too busy distributing powder, even to speak one farewell word to Ethel, as she was taken below by Heriot, who soon after reappeared with all the arms they had on board: to wit—his own pair of excellent pistols, the captain's two six-barrel revolvers, six old brass-barrelled pistols taken from the mutineers, their sheath-knives, the double-barrelled fowling-piece, a sharp hatchet, and a harpoon.

Thus they had nearly a brace of pistols each, and, fortunately, plenty of ball ammunition made up into

cartridge form for the contingencies of the Madagascar coast.

In less than ten minutes all was in readiness; all were certainly silent, pale, and desperate, for all felt that death and utter destruction were awfully close at hand.

The misery of the Bassets and the two lovers was more poignant than any emotion felt by their companions, who were chiefly inspired by the natural impulse of self-preservation, without the paralysing horror that on their lives depended the lives of others who were most dear to them; but the whole affair had come upon them with the suddenness of a thunderclap, and as yet, perhaps, they could scarcely understand the terrors of their situation.

"These cursed proas were about five miles off, you say, doctor?" said the captain, in a low voice, as he looked at his watch.

"Yes, sir; five to leeward of the island."

"The wind is light, though increasing."

"They had neither spars nor sails up, sir, and so may not be here for more than an hour yet, though swiftly paddled."

"They may not come here at all," said Bartelot; "for perhaps they may be quite ignorant that we are lying in the creek."

"If not aware now they will soon be," said Morley; "they were steering directly for the creek,

and I don't think these mangroves will hide the ship's spars."

"Still they may pass it," said Tom, hopefully, as he carefully capped his revolver, and slung it by his side.

The others shook their heads despondingly, and Noah put a quid into his cheek, with the nowise cheering reflection that it was "mayhap the last" he would ever put there.

"It was a fortunate proposal of yours to climb the cliff, doctor," said Morley.

"I thank Heaven for the thought," replied Heriot, emphatically; "for had those Malay devils found us unprepared——"

"My blood runs cold at the idea."

"How quietly they might have come upon us in the night," suggested Morrison.

"They are perhaps strong enough to despise stratagem," said Captain Phillips.

"More likely, sir, that old bumboatman, Puff, hadn't time to blow the gaff on us, or we might all have been with Davy Jones last night," said Noah.

All spoke in a species of whisper, and all looked at their watches from time to time, and listened so intently, that an uninformed spectator might have thought they were waiting with impatience, but they heard no sound, save the buzz of insect life in

the mangroves and dense jungle, around that slimy creek.

All was equally still below. Secured in the cabin, Ethel and Rose were on their knees, with their old nurse, in an agony of terror, amid which they strove in vain to pray. Mr. Basset, too frail to work at the guns, or be active in the defence of the deck, sat in the companion-way, ready to reload the fire-arms when they were discharged, and now Noah got the matches ready.

How the old fellow's eyes lit up! A brightness spread over his storm-beaten and sorely-wrinkled visage, making him seem almost young again, for he felt that it was to him—the old man-o'-war's-man—he who had heard the thunder of Sebastopol, and seen the Russian bombs strewing all the Valley of Death; he who had gone with Peel's Brigade and Havelock's Highlanders to Lucknow and to Delhi—his superiors and shipmates were now looking chiefly for direction and advice.

They all knew well enough how to load and fire, or ram home the charge with a capstan-bar; but skill in adjusting the sight and the quoin under the breech became a different affair.

"Now, gen'lemen shipmates by your leave," said he, "we must fire and reload each gun as fast as possible; but it will be safer if number four don't fire till number *vun* is reloaded."

Almost despairing alike of a successful defence, or an ultimate victory, Captain Phillips suggested the idea of putting Mr. Basset and his two daughters into the gig, and sculling her to a secluded place among the mangroves.

"But, if the ship is taken, and we are all destroyed," said Morley, "oh, what in Heaven's name would become of them then? They would die of terror, exposure, and starvation."

"The creek is full of alligators, too!" added Heriot.

"But what may happen to them on board if we are all killed?" asked Captain Phillips.

The contemplation of that result nearly drove Morley and Heriot mad, and they knew not what to reply.

"It might give the poor ladies, at least, one other chance for life if we hid them in the maintop, for we may have to take to the rigging yet, if these warmint capture the deck by boarding, and up there we may have to fight to the last with knives or pistols, or whatever we have."

"And how, Noah, if the Malays cut the mast away?"

"Or fire the ship?"

"No chance of escape, and none of rescue!" groaned Captain Phillips; "there is a fine breeze in the offing, as I can see by the whitening waves; but

here, with not hands enough to tow her out, the crippled *Hermione* might as well be on the top of a mountain."

"Ah, if I had that artful savage with the cocked hat within range of this!" said Morley, through his clenched teeth, as he slapped the butt of his gun.

"Run up the ensign, Noah; let them look at *that*, whoever they are. We'll die game under it, anyhow," said Phillips, as something of a British sailor's pride and defiant spirit filled his heart.

"Aye," responded Noah, as he ran the scarlet ensign up to the gaff-peak, where it floated languidly at first on the still air of the sheltered creek, but anon the coming breeze made it stream out boldly; "many a round shot and Whistling-Dick I've seen a bowlin' under you," added Noah, as he made fast the halyards, looked up at the colour, and nodded to it as to an old friend.

Anxiously the eyes of the "few but undismayed"—for their courage certainly rose with the desperation of the emergency—were turned to the mouth of the creek, where, between the rocks and mangroves, the deep blue Indian sea, now flecked with white by the breath of a fine steady breeze, was seen stretching in the distance far, far away, until it blended with the sky.

Still nothing was seen and nothing heard!

But ere long, each of the eight men on the deck of the *Hermione* set his teeth, breathed hard, and turned to his companions, eye seeking eye, while all their hearts beat quicker.

For suddenly there was an unmistakable sound of paddling in the air, and then a shrill yell went up to heaven, as the sharp red prow of a proa, full of dark and active figures, shot round the entrance of the creek, and a row of rapidly-worked round paddles, shaped like huge battledores, furrowed up all the slimy water into foam, as they headed her straight for the ship.

CHAPTER XXII.

EIGHT AGAINST EIGHTY.

Noah had the first carronade on the right—that is, abreast of the mainmast. Stooping down, he trained it carefully, elevating and then slightly depressing the muzzle till he covered the object. He then smartly withdrew, lowered the match, and the recoil and report of the gun was followed by a yell from the Malays, whose rowers were seen tumbling from side to side, as if making summersets; for the shot, with its scattering accompaniment of broken bottles, made a complete lane from stem to stern, through the dingy occupants of the proa.

The echoes of the gun, with the cries of the Malays, rung with a thousand reverberations amid the rocks of the creek, startling clouds of wild birds from the mangroves and cane-brake beyond them.

"Fire number two—steady, Captain Phillips, please; here comes the next proa. Blaze away at the blasted warmint! Rake her fore and aft before she forges ahead!"

So shouted old Noah, while adroitly he assisted the recoil of his carronade, ran it back with the aid of Morley, and proceeded to reload and ram home. Captain Phillips, less used to this kind of work than he, levelled his carronade and fired; but he had not trained it properly, for, although the additional charge of broken bottles did some execution among the thick skulls of the Malays, the round shot whistled harmlessly over them all, and was seen ricochetting over the waves, till it made a white water-spout in the offing, far beyond the mouth of the creek.

Noah danced with disappointment and chagrin.

"Now, Mr. Morrison," he cried; "number three —level low—quick! here comes the next lot, a paddling like so many devils. Sweep the scum into eternity."

Morrison fired, and carried away the whole line of starboard paddles, and with them, perhaps, the rower's arms. Then, veering round, she thus fell foul of the first proa, just as the third came sweeping round, and headed towards the creek.

The scene was now terrible; there were some seventy or eighty Malays, many streaming with blood, all waving their paddles and weapons, and uttering such yells as one might imagine to rise from the infernal regions—yells inspired alike by the hope of plunder and of vengeance.

Then the contents of the third carronade, trained by Heriot and Foster, sped on the errand of death, right through them all, just as the leading proa got clear. Half its starboard side was torn away, and thus all its occupants were left to swim or flounder; the dead to sink and the wounded to drown, amid the slimy ooze of the creek.

While more than twenty were swimming, splashing, and scrambling ashore on each side, the paddlers in the other proas resumed their work, scooping the water astern with preternatural vigour, but to avoid a raking shot, presented more of their broadside to the ship, and hence retarded their own progress; so Noah fired his carronade right through one, just abaft the centre thwart, by this oblique shot killing or disabling three or four.

The yells were now appalling, the scene terrible, and yet withal most picturesque and striking.

The savage rabble in these proas were the woolly-headed Madecasses, who are partly of African descent; but all their leaders—and several appeared in each proa—were olive-skinned men, Hovahs, who are supposed to be of purer blood, and are viewed by the people of Madagascar somewhat as the Normans were by the Anglo-Saxons.

These men wore tunics of scarlet silk, like those of the Chinese, girt by sashes or belts; but their negro followers were naked, a few only having

clothes about their middle, or wearing the ordinary garment of the Madecasses, which is made of bark, boiled and beaten, and shaped like a flour-sack, with a hole for the head, and four others for the legs and arms.

All wore chains, ear-rings, and bracelets of crystal cornelian, and even gold, and many were armed with assegais, headed like spears, with long, sharp, iron points; many had bucklers of hard wood, covered with hides. Some had ten or twelve javelins each; a few had clumsy old muskets, fortunately much addicted to hanging fire; and all had the native creese—a long, wavy, double-edged dagger. When we add to this equipment their black, ferocious faces, their shrill yells and diabolical activity, their white, glistening teeth, their glaring eyeballs, and whole *tout ensemble,* the reader may imagine the scene presented at this crisis in the mangrove creek.

The explosion of the first carronade had drawn a simultaneous shriek and shudder from the two girls, and their old nurse, in the cabin, and a cheer from their eight devoted friends on deck, while with it, and with every future discharge, the pintados, the black paroquets, the spoonbills, and the turtle-doves flew in screaming coveys out of the jungle.

"Depress your muzzles!" cried Noah, who had,

by tacit consent apparently, constituted himself master-gunner; "they're nearing us, mates."

"Another dose of broken bottles; they make first-rate grape and canister," added Morrison.

"Crouch down—crouch down—here's a volley of something coming!" shouted Captain Phillips, from his gun, as four or five musket-bullets crashed through the bulwarks, and a number of arrows or javelins and assegais, whistled harmlessly over their heads, and fell pattering on the starboard side of the deck, as fast as the survivors of the shattered proas scrambled ashore, and began to use their weapons.

"The warp—the starn warp!" shouted Noah, as with muzzle depressed, he fired his carronade again; "pick off some o' those d——d heathen niggers afore they cuts it, some one."

Two savages had already reached the warp, which was carried through the taffrail to the kedge, and were proceeding to slash through the strands of the strong Manilla, hewing with their creeses, and, had they done so, the ship must have swerved round, and gone ashore, broadside on.

Morley snatched up the double-barrelled gun which Mr. Basset had just reloaded. Kneeling down, he levelled it steadily through the taffrail, and shot both down in quick succession—a strange and wild emotion coming over him as he saw them

fall, and beat the earth with their hands and feet. This cooled the ardour of five or six others, who followed, for he saw them plunge down among the mangroves, where they lay flat in concealment.

At that moment, a Hovah, in a crimson shirt, who had clambered, all wet and dripping, up the mizzen chains, launched an assegai at Morley, which skinned his right ear, and stuck quivering in the deck, near the coaming of the main-hatch. He then proceeded to scramble on board, with his sharp creese in his teeth, and a savage glitter in his eye, when Morley clubbed the double-barrelled gun, and swinging it aloft at the full stretch of his arms, dealt the Hovah a blow on his hard caput, which tumbled him prone into the water; but the gun was destroyed, as it snapped in two at the small part of the butt.

Morley rushed back to rejoin his friends at the carronades; but found poor Noah grappling with a gigantic Malay, who had dropped over the bulwark near the starboard quarter, where they were rolling over each other, Noah swearing, and the Malay biting and howling, till the former, grasping the long, tawny ears of the latter, rings and all, dashed his head thrice on the deck, when he stunned, and then flung him overboard.

At that moment an arrow, which all feared might be poisoned—whistled through Noah's cheeks,

knocking out a couple of his few remaining teeth; but with a pistol he shot dead the archer, who was nestling among the mangroves.

So far as the eight unfortunates on the deck of the *Hermione* could judge, they had been attacked by not less than eighty men!

Now the two proas were close alongside; another moment would have seen the savage Malays swarming in scores up the bulwarks and over the decks; but just as a groan of dismay simultaneously burst from the few devoted defenders of the *Hermione*, her head warp was slashed through by creeses, and she suddenly fell away round before the south-west breeze, with her bow towards the sea, thus increasing the distance between her assailants and herself by the whole length of her stern warp, at a moment when all the Malays were in the act of standing up to leap on board, and as she so swerved away, she went right ashore, broadside on, amongst the mangroves, with all her four carronades pointed *to the land*, leaving her starboard side unprotected against the yelling occupants of the two remaining proas.

"God help us!" cried poor Captain Phillips, in despair; "all is over now!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"WE'LL GO TO SEA NO MORE!"

THE despairing exclamation of the worthy captain had a very singular sequel, for scarcely had it left his lips, and just when the paddlers were again scooping away, as, with yells of exulting fury, the Malays proceeded after the *Hermione*; just when those who were ashore were forcing a passage to her through the jungle, and when the full term of another minute would have closed the whole catastrophe—lo! with all the suddenness of a spectral illusion, or of the Flying Dutchman's famous craft, a noble-looking ship, all a cloud of canvas, white as snow, swept round the verge of the cliff, and lay to, right off the mouth off the creek.

Bending gracefully over beneath the south-west breeze, she had her royals and topsails set, and the scarlet British ensign streamed from her gaff-peak.

Like the work of magic, her lighter sails were taken in, and her head-sails clewed up; then, as she rounded to, under her mizzen-topsail, with her

broadside fairly opposed to the creek, a plunge was heard as the great working anchor was let go.

At the same moment, fire and smoke burst from her quarter, and ran like a flashing garland along her whole side, as, with two twelve-pounders, and about twenty short Enfield rifles, her crew opened a destructive discharge on the Malays.

As the well-directed shot plunged through them, the two remaining proas were dashed to pieces, and, amid the fragments of wood, floating assegais, and gouts of blood, their crews were seen making for the mangroves, right and left, scrambling ashore, and taking to flight in every direction.

The great ship had no occasion to discharge her guns again; but the short Enfields of her crew knocked over a number of the Malays, as they became visible at times, while prosecuting their flight inland.

The moment the firing ceased, and before the white smoke had curled away, the yards were manned, and the three topsails disappeared into their bunt at once. From the foretopgallant-yard down to the stay, came the men, sliding like lightning, to furl and stow the jib in its netting.

The great white courses were furled with equal rapidity, and with a neatness that drew exclamations of admiration, mingled with those of surprise and joy, from those on the deck of the rescued *Hermion*

Then down came the royal yards from aloft, and, ere long, the great ship was bared of all, save her bright scarlet ensign, which floated out astern.

She was a splendid ship, full-rigged and full-manned, with a clean, white paint-stroke, and gaily-gilded quarter-galleries; she was remarkably straight in the bends, like a Spaniard or a Yankee, with all her rigging and spars in the finest order. Thus she presented a noble appearance, as she rode at her anchor under the brow of the lofty cliff. Then, with the same man-o'-war-like order and rapidity which characterised all her other manœuvres, a boat was hoisted out, lowered away, and its crew carried an anchor astern, to moor her more securely.

From the stern davits, the captain's gig, light and smart as a London wherry, was lowered with a splash into the water. He was seen to descend the rope-ladder rapidly, to seat himself in the stern and to grasp the yoke-lines, while a crew of smart lads, chiefly ship-apprentices, pulled straight through the bloody *débris* of the creek towards the *Hermione*.

The captain, a ruddy-visaged and sandy-haired man, about thirty-five, with plenty of yellow beard and moustache, stood up, as he drew near, and waved his cap.

"You have had some sharp work here, I think," said he; "we heard the sound of the firing as we stood round the island. Glad we have been in time to save you."

"Thanks be to Heaven, you have—and many heartfelt thanks to you, for you have indeed saved all our lives, and my ship, also!" exclaimed Captain Phillips.

"*All?* There don't seem to be very many of you," replied the stranger, as his boat came sheering alongside, and the oars were all uplifted and laid in together, while he swung himself up with great agility, and jumped over the bulwarks on deck, when the eight of the *Hermione* gathered round him. "Creeping along the shore in search of fresh water," he resumed, "we were told by an old Malay boatman——"

"Puffadder?" said Bartelot.

"Yes; you know him then—that we should find it here."

"The old scoundrel!" exclaimed Heriot.

"With the same story he snared us into the creek," added Phillips.

"Old Puffadder wasn't to blame, for he begged me to make haste and assist a British ship that some island pirates were attacking, so we clapped on royals, skysails, gaff-topsail, and everything that would draw, got our small arms up, our guns cast

loose and all ready to help you, and we seem just to have been in time."

"You have done well and bravely, sir," said Mr. Basset, with gratitude and enthusiasm.

"And what ship is yours?" asked Phillips.

"The *Duke of Rothesay,* 800 tons, hailing from Alloa, and bound for Singapore, Duncan Davidson, master (that is me) at your service; and yours?"

"The *Hermione,* of London, also bound for Singapore, and touching at the Isle of France."

And now various matters, which are already known to the reader, were related and explained to the Scotch skipper, which made him wonder very much; and much more was his wonder excited when, on being invited down to the cabin, he found himself fairly hugged by Rose Basset, who, in fact, was rather in a delirious state, after all the cannonading she had heard and the number of savage brown figures she had seen from the stern-windows skipping among the mangroves.

Ethel threw herself into her father's arms in a passion of tears, and pressed Morley's hand to her heart.

"Saved, Ethel, saved!" said Mr. Basset, caressing her tenderly.

"Yes, Ethel, saved," added Morley, "and except my scratched ear and Noah's cheek, not a man of us the worse of the whole affair."

"By Heaven's mercy and this gallant seaman's safe arrival, we have, indeed, escaped a great—it would have been, indeed, a *last*—peril, Ethel," said Mr. Basset, as she presented her hand to Captain Davidson, who, though a rough, weather-beaten, and rather plain Scotsman, surveyed her soft dark eyes, her pale and thoughtful face, that beamed with soul and feeling, her glossy hair and fine figure, with an admiration that he was too honest or too unsophisticated to conceal. So, while he addressed some words of congratulation and soothing, to the effect that "all danger was now over, as he had knocked the black niggers into the middle of next week," Captain Phillips, acting as his own steward, has wedged his fat figure into a locker, from whence he fished out sundry case-bottles and glasses with nervous rapidity.

And this fine stately ship of Alloa, on the Forth, armed with four twelve-pounders, and having a crew of forty men and boys, coming with all sails crowded before a spanking breeze, from near the cove where old Puffadder's wigwam stood, was what Morley and Heriot would have seen had they obtained a south-west view of the ocean, but, as we have related, an eminence hid her from them, and the entire islet hid her from the pirates, until, with shotted guns, loaded rifles, and colours flying, she came down full swoop upon them.

The cutting of the warp and the circumstance of the *Hermione* thereby falling away round from the centre of the creek, greatly favoured the fire of this friendly stranger's cannon and musketry.

So old Radama Puffadder was no traitor, but the means of saving them, after all!

"Those were heavy guns you fired, sir," remarked Morley to Captain Davidson, who had mixed his grog, and prior to imbibing it drank every one's health in the Scotch fashion.

"Heavy for a merchantman — yes; twelve-pounders."

"How came you to be so well armed?" asked Mr. Basset.

"Well, sir," replied Captain Davidson, laughing, as he tossed off his glass of grog, "whether it is the alleged national caution, or, what is better, the good old national spirit of pugnacity, I don't know, but our Scottish ships, especially in these seas, are generally well armed, and seldom unprepared for anything—and I have a splendid crew—the pick of Leith and Grangemouth! So now, Captain Phillips, my gig is alongside, and while our carpenters come aboard of you, and put you into a little shape, I hope the young ladies and your other friends will come and dine with me, and see what we can find in the lockers of the *Duke?* Don't be afraid, ladies—I

shall give you something better than sheep's-head and haggis."

This invitation was as promptly accepted as it was hospitably given, and all prepared to accompany Captain Davidson, save Mr. Foster and Noah, who were obliged to remain on board; and fortunately, Heriot could now prove that the arrow which pierced the cheeks of the latter was *not* poisoned.

In and around the ships, there was much to make Ethel and her sister shudder.

On the deck, near the taffrail, lay a dead Madecasse, whose head Morrison had cloven with a hatchet. He had the smooth European hair, the Indian complexion, the broad forehead, the thin lips (now pale and ghastly) of his mixed and peculiar race. His right hand held a broken assegai, and his left yet clutched the peak halyards, which he had grasped on gaining the deck.

Many bodies floated about in the creek, many more had sunk, and several places bore unmistakable tinges of blood among the ooze and green slime, while four crocodiles were seen at one time devouring the dead, till fired on by the Scotch sailors.

But all these horrors, and their recent alarm, were gradually forgotten, amid the hospitality and jollity of Captain Davidson, his mates, and the numerous crew of the new ship; and as soon as their water-tank was filled next day, all bore a hand in getting

the *Hermione* ready for sea, shipping jury spars on her fore and mizzen topmasts, and warping her out of the creek.

As the *Hermione* was so short of hands, Captain Davidson offered to put three men and one of his apprentices on board, to assist in working her; an offer which Captain Phillips gladly accepted, and they agreed to sail together in company.

On the second day after the conflict with the proas, both ships were ready for sea.

Morning was dawning on the cliffs of that lonely isle, and in great beauty. A long streak of opal-tinted light spread over the horizon; gradually it brightened into amber, and from amber melted into crimson—the deep crimson of sunset, *elsewhere* as the tall Alloa ship weighed anchor, set her canvas, and began to stand off towards the north-east.

A number of her men were still on board the *Hermione,* assisting to warp her out. Her courses hung in the clew-lines ready to be let fall; her three jury-topsails were cast loose, and ready for hoisting, and soon she was ready for sea.

Then Ethel and Rose, as they nestled together on their pillows in the cabin below, heard the cheerful notes of a fiddle, the tramp of feet as the capstan bars were shipped, and the Scotch sailors trod merrily round, to the air of "The Boatie Rows," while one sung a song well known on the banks

of the Forth; and louder stamped their feet, and louder swelled their hearty voices at the chorus of each verse, of which there were several, like this:—

"I have seen the waves as blue as air,
I have seen them green as grass;
But I never feared their heaving yet,
Frae Grangemouth to the Bass;
I have seen the sea as black as pitch,
I have seen it white as snow;
But I never feared its foaming yet,
Though winds blew high or low."

"Now, boys," shouted Morrison; "chorus—chorus! Heave and rally! Walk away with it! Hurrah!"

Then heavier trod the feet, and louder swelled the fiddle, and all their voices rose together:

"*When* squalls capsize our wooden walls,
When the French ride at the Nore,
When Leith meets Aberdeen halfway,
We'll go to sea no more.
No more,
We'll go to sea no more."*

The cheerful voice of Captain Phillips was soon heard, ordering:

"Let fall, and sheet home."

"Good morning, Ethel," said Morley, tapping on her cabin-door; "we are fairly clear of the creek and its crocodiles, and under weigh for the Isle of France."

* Book of Scottish Song.

It was, indeed, a glorious morning. Under a cloud of canvas, even to her royals and angular sky-sails, the Scottish ship took the lead, and her giant shadow fell far across the ocean.

Red, round, and flashing in his effulgence, up came the god of day, and the tall reedy cane-brakes and solemn drooping palm groves of the shore they were leaving, the sea ahead and the deck beneath their feet, were all red as if aflame. Ruddy gold, edged and gilt every rope, face, and object, the shadows of the two ships falling in purple on the crimson flush, which gradually melted away, as the sun rose upward, and lit all the far horizon of the Indian Sea.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ANCHOR IS LET GO.

Our story is now drawing to a close, but no sudden or striking *tableau*, no tremendous *dénouement* or poetical rhapsody will attend the fall of the curtain, albeit that truth is stranger than fiction.

The ships sailed in company.. They were seldom far apart, and often were so near that those on board could hail each other and converse.

The weather was fine, the trade-wind steady, and the remainder of the voyage proved alike pleasant and prosperous.

Of the Isle of Bourbon they saw only the smoke of its volcano, rising into the clear air of a calm morning, and by sunset of the following day, the colours displayed from the gaff-peak of the *Duke of Rothesay*, which was ten miles ahead, and the discharge of one of her twelve-pounders to windward, announced that the Isle of France was in sight although not visible from the main-top of the *Hermione*; but the report of the gun sent a thrill through the hearts of all on board.

The stormy petrel was tripping around them the same as ever; but they had no fears now, for after sunset the harbour lights of Port Louis were seen to twinkle over the sea; so the cables were roused out of the tier, and rattled cheerily as they were laid in fakes along the deck; they were bent to the anchors; the deep sea lead was in constant requisition, and the hawsers were brought up from between decks.

By daybreak next morning the ships were close in shore, and in the pilot's charge, with a fine breeze, ran in between Fort Blanc and the Isles des Tonneliers, so the spires of the town were right ahead. As the ship, with her courses clewed up, ran under her jury topsails and driver into the fine old harbour of Port Louis, Morley and Ethel were on deck together. Rose was below with Nance Folgate, busy packing, though her more thoughtful sister had done all her own share of that duty long ago.

Morley seemed a prey to unusual sadness, and as she caressed his hand kindly from time to time, and while her gentle eyes filled alternately with pensive tenderness or sparkling animation, she could barely obtain a response to her inquiries; for now that the voyage was ended, that their dangers were over, and all excitement had passed away, he felt a melancholy that he could not overcome, and against

which he struggled in vain. This emotion was very natural. He knew not what was before him now in this strange land—this half-French colony, where on the morrow he would find himself without a shilling in his pocket.

Hesitatingly, and while his now weather-beaten cheek glowed with honest shame, he said something of this to Ethel; but she sought to cheer him, and added that his friends, Captain Bartelot, the Scotch mate Morrison, and old Noah were precisely in the same predicament, yet they were all merry as crickets, whistling and singing, while, with the three men of the Scotch ship, they hoisted the great rusty anchors over the bows.

"Ah, Ethel, do not smile as if you would mock me," said Morley, with unwonted irritation; "it is our, or rather my, uncertain fortune that haunts and galls me now."

He knew, beyond a doubt, that the doctor would marry Rose as soon as he could rejoin her, or get quit of the ship; Morley knew that Heriot had his profession, a moderate competence, and excellent monetary prospects; but what had he?

Mr. Basset's health was so hopelessly impaired by all he had undergone as to preclude any chance of his assuming his legal functions, or, indeed, doing more in the matter of his judgeship than simply to resign it on landing.

His local influence would thus be dissipated, and already he spoke of returning to England on the first suitable opportunity, resolving to pass the remainder of his days there, even with his crippled means; so, after all they had endured, Morley and Ethel, as they gazed mournfully and tenderly into each other's eyes, felt that the course of true love was as unlike a railway as possible.

But now the sails were handed, the anchor let go with a plunge into the seething flood, and exactly three months and fourteen days from the time of her leaving the London Docks, the *Hermione* swung at her moorings in the harbour of Port Louis, distant only a few fathoms from her late companion and protector, the stately ship of Alloa.

Quarantine laws, custom-house harpies, and all such necessary annoyances satisfied, the ship brokers came on board, and one of them brought for Mr. Basset a packet of letters, which had arrived fully a fortnight before, by a passing ship.

There were letters for Ethel and Rose, from Jack and Lucy Page, and other dear friends at Acton-Rennel, full of home gossip, all of vast interest to them now; and there were some very business-like documents "for papa," who carefully wiped his gold spectacles prior to reading them; while Morley, who had not a friend in England, felt bitterly there was nothing for him; so he slunk, as he thought, un-

noticed on deck, to watch the bustle of the port and shipping, and to forget even himself, if he could, for a time.

The contents of his two first letters certainly made Mr. Basset stare very much, and wipe his glasses again, ere he read them a second time, and fairly took in the full meaning of their contents.

They were from his old friend, the M.P. for Acton-Rennel, who had procured him the now useless judgeship, and from his solicitor in Westminster, informing him that, by two most unexpected deaths, Ethel and Rose, in right of their deceased mother, had become rich—quite heiresses in fact, of not less than three thousand pounds each, yearly, in government securities and other investments; full particulars of which would be forwarded by the next mail.

Ethel sat for a time like one bewitched, on hearing this.

Then, after Mr. Basset had explained it all to her, she hurried on deck to where Morley Ashton, with his head between his hands, was gazing moodily and dreamily over the gunwale, at the slime and ooze under the ship's counter; and caring little whether she were seen or not, she stole one arm tenderly round his neck, and whispered in his ear the story of *their* good fortune, adding that now she could reward him for all his love and faith, and for all he had endured: and more than once she had

to repeat all this, ere she was fully understood by the poor bewildered fellow.

Thus, from a state of uncertainty, doubt, utter despondency at times, was Morley Ashton rewarded, indeed, for all he had undergone. The wheel of fortune had revolved completely in his favour, and he felt raised "to the seventh heaven" by Ethel's happy news.

So they were now safe, rich, and happy, with their dearest wishes about to be realised!

All around them seemed to be joyous and sunshiny. All so quiet, so still, and yet such happiness was theirs!

Their double separation, the sorrow of Morley's supposed death, his detention at Rio, and his sufferings on the wreck; the mutiny, and the piratical Malays; the entire past, with all its terrible contingencies—where was it now?

Gone indeed, and to be forgotten!

The future—oh, they had no fears for it; the present, the glorious, blissful present, was alone to be considered. And so thought Ethel Basset, as on the last evening they were to spend in the cabin of the *Hermione* she sat hand in hand with Morley, and alone, her head reclined upon his shoulder, and his arm caressingly around her, as they whispered of the arrangements they were to make at home, and how they would have Laurel Lodge again, with

papa to care for, and how Rose and Leslie Heriot would have one of those pretty new villas with the green blinds and plate-glass windows at Cherrywood Hill.

Inquiries concerning, or, as the Scots say, "anent" the loss of the *Princess,* and the marooning of the crew of the *Hermione* in the Mozambique Channel, were duly conducted by Captain Sir Horace Seymour, of H.M.S. *Clyde,* and the nautical assessor of the Board of Trade at Port Louis, and the decision of the court freed our friends Bartelot and Phillips from all blame, their captains' certificates being returned to them by Sir Horace Seymour, with many complimentary remarks.

Mr. Basset resigned his appointment into the hands of the Governor, and prepared to return to England; but as there is no true happiness without alloy, Heriot could not procure a substitute or successor, and so, when the *Hermione* was refitted and fully manned, he found himself compelled to sail with her to Singapore.

Morrison went with her as chief mate, and Mr. Foster as second, and she sailed out of Port Louis, dipping adieux with her ensign, and firing her carronades in gallant style, old Captain Phillips and poor Heriot continuing to wave their hats so long as two figures in light dresses were visible on the mole.

Poor little Rose shed abundance of tears. She

thought herself Virginia torn from her Paul, and the most ill-used young lady in the world. She moped for a long time, and gave up her diary; it was no use now, when she was so soon to see Lucy Page again.

We need not detail how, prior to their departure, many a picnic was made to all the places consecrated by the loves of Paul and Virginia, and how many a sketch was made in Ethel's portfolio of the Shaddock Grove, the marvellous Petterbotte, and other places.

Tom Bartelot was to return to England with them, and get another ship.

Noah had been offered a berth on board the *Hermione*, but he declined.

"No more marchantmen for me," said he; "I'm for the Queen's sarvice, so long as I can lift tack or sheet, hand or foot; then Grinnidge arter."

So he shipped on board the *Clyde*, which about this time steamed away towards the mouth of the Mozambique Channel, in search of the pirates, who had again made their appearance in several proas.

Noah acted as a species of guide; but no trace of their presence could be found in that quarter, save the bare, bleached skull of poor old Captain Puff-adder, whose agency in our friends' escape had been discovered by the Malays, and who had been buried by them up to his neck in sand on the sea-

shore, and left thus to perish under the advancing tide, like the famous Wigton martyrs of the delirious sheriff of Dumfries.

Notices will be found in the various newspapers of that month, stating that, in north latitude 27 deg. 30 min., and east longitude 40 deg. 10 min., near the Europa Rocks, H.M.S. *Clyde* picked up a boat, with two dead bodies in it. One was evidently that of a South American, with rings in his ears; the other was of great stature, and supposed to be a Yankee seaman.

Noah declared them to be Zuares Barradas and Badger, from Cape Cod—the last of the mutineers.

By a curious coincidence, one of these papers paragraphed that the Portuguese at Tristan d'Acunha were building a chapel over the grave of the elder Barradas, who among them has the reputation of such great sanctity, that his island is now the scene of annual summer pilgrimages.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

Eight months after all this, it was in the drawing-room of Laurel Lodge that those whose adventures we have traced so far were all waiting for the boom of the dinner-gong, for it was the evening of Ethel's birthday; and she had been a bride four months, while Rose had been wedded but a few weeks—so both were all smiles, white lace, and loveliness.

All that day the familiar chimes of Acton-Rennel (which had rung in honour of their return) had jangled merrily in the square Norman tower, sending their notes over the chase, the mere, the long green English lanes, and kindling joy in many a worthy heart that loved the Bassets, and who now, in home-brewed brown October, drank deep to their healths, and welcome home!

Many of "Papa's household gods," as Ethel named them, which had been bought by old friends, found their way back again to Laurel Lodge. "Mamma's" picture hung in the usual place—even

on its old nails; and Rose's azaleas still bloomed in the conservatory, as on the night when Hawkshaw laughed at them.

Morley and Ethel occupied her old room, and often, when she drew the curtains, she thought of that terrible morning when she looked up to Acton Chine and thought a darkness had fallen on the outer world. How difficult to realise all that had passed since then!

There was present the old rector (papa's friend); he had read the last service for Ethel's mamma, and who preached the sermon prior to their departure; and there, too, were Lucy Page and her brother Jack, who looked not a whit the worse for being jilted by Rose, as all the folks in the village say he was, for the rector's black-eyed daughter has undertaken to console him, while Lucy leans with pleasant confidence on the arm of the young fox-hunting squire of Cherrywood Hill, in out-door sports the rival of Jack, who is a first-class shot, and scores with ease his ninety odd points among the members of the 1st A.R.R.R.V.C., which mysterious letters mean the Acton-Rennel Royal Rifle Volunteer Corps, a distinguished body of men, which our friend Morley has since joined.

The squire of Acton-Rennel had come over in his old lumbering coach, and sat as of yore in a cosy easy-chair, opposite Mr. Basset, whose hair has

become rather gray, for he has been much aged by all he has undergone, though carefully tended by his daughters, by Morley and Heriot (who, though quite independent, is rapidly acquiring a splendid country practice at Acton-Rennel), and by old Nance Folgate, whose voyaging she believes to exceed in marvel all that ever was recorded by Sir John Mandeville or old Richard Hakluyt.

Bluff Captain Phillips (who is about to persuade the plump little widow of Gravesend to change her name to his) was there too, and his presence made them regret the absence of honest Morrison, who had gone home to Scotland, and of jovial Tom Bartelot, who was in London, it was whispered, with certain matrimonial views upon the girl of the Hampton Court memories, in which he indulged when on the wreck, and which views, we hope, he may realise ere long.

Noah Gawthrop, who was then, as he would have phrased it, "a brilin' aboard the *Clyde*," in the Indian Seas, was not forgotten when the cloth was removed after dinner; and we believe he will yet cast anchor in charge of the gate lodge, with its heraldic unicorns, and may yet teach a little Morley Ashton to handle an oar in the skiff on Acton mere, and may become in the bar of the "Basset Arms" a great oracle upon all that appertaineth unto salt water.

On this evening they were all very happy and merry, and the jolly rector, in proposing Ethel's health and prosperity, declared that Mr. Basset's daughters were alike improved in quality and tint, for having been—like good Madeira—twice round the Cape, a species of compliment which the two squires laughed at uproariously, so the hearty good-humour and merriment waxed apace.

"How unlike the past!" thought Morley, as he glanced at his beautiful young wife in diamonds and lace; "here, indeed, 'the world seems a good one to live in, and easy to get on with!'"

Morley felt half as in a dream.

It was the last day of October, the sun's declining rays were gilding the shamble-oak, and his brethren of the old Saxon chase, the tower of the village church, and the rocks of the chine. (You remember them, reader? If you don't, we rather think Mr. Ashton does.) A sky of clouds that were white, broken, and dappled, edged with gold, and floating in amber, was over all. Fragrance and verdure, fertility and vegetable life, that they may bud and bloom in all their strength in spring, were going to sleep for the winter in the coppice and on the uplands.

The nearly-stripped woodlands loomed darkly out of the golden evening haze, and the glorious sun, as he sank, while the village chimes rang out, made

Morley feel somehow happy, charitable, and kind to the world in general. And so he thought, as he glanced from Ethel, who was now singing at the piano one of her old familiar songs to Rose, who, though a wedded wife, was seated on a hassock near her father's knee, which had always been her place after dinner, since she cut her first pearly teeth and drank milk out of the sponsorial silver mug, given her by old Mr. Page, Jack's father.

She was rollicking, as of old, with Lucy, a charming specimen of a frank-hearted, fresh-complexioned country girl, and teasing her brother Jack, a young Englishman complete, ruddy-cheeked, with a smart moustache, long whiskers, and a head of close curly brown hair.

Though the prime bowler of the Acton eleven, the crack shot of the Acton Corps, a fellow who could run, leap, or shoot even with a Highlandman, the good wine he had drunk loosed his tongue, and, as Morley and he promenaded in the avenue, he told him rather mysteriously, between the puffs of Latakia, which rose from his meerschaum, that he "*had* been jilted by Rose chiefly because he was a thundering bad dancer, and never knew a note of music in his life." But Jack, we have said, was likely to find consolation.

Though leaving them all happy in their old English home, we feel loath alike to part with them

and with the reader, who has accompanied us so far; but we leave them all, we hope, with health, wealth, and young life before them.

The sun has set, and the Acton bells have ceased, so part we must, though, perhaps, for a time.

THE END.

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